Of Blue Birds and Teacup Shards

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Of Blue Birds and Teacup Shards

by SilasSolarius

Summary

After Blockbuster's death, and the events that followed, Dick Grayson vanishes. Ten years later, the Bat family find an article on Tattle Crime that will lead them directly to their missing blue bird, and, more importantly, the new monster lurking over his shoulder.

Notes

Apprentice fanfics + Hannibal= This.

Chapter 1

“Don’t…”

“Sh, querido, it's alright.” A soft gasp sounded, a warm slender body moving atop his even as his very being was engulfed in a terrible numbness.

He’d failed her.

Failed his family.

Failed Br-

“Don’t touch me...I’m…”

Still she continued to move, paying no mind to the icy rain pouring over them. The dark red of blood washing away from their skin.

“Everything’s alright, baby,” she breathed, her voice deepening, hands spasming against his chest. For a moment the vision flickered.

Dark hair became white, slim form becoming broader, more muscular.

Mas- no.

Sl- **NO!**

His head listed to the side, the vision flickering back to ***her*** *. “...poisonous. Numb, I…”*

She sped up slightly, almost as if she hadn't heard a word he spoke. Still he continued speaking.

"Killed him...We killed him."

She shushed him, her long dark hair falling in a wet veil over her shoulders as she leaned down to brush her lips over his. He could feel something deep within him cracking.

For so long, he'd been the strong one. The one that always bounced back.

But this...

"Hush," she admonished, gentle and cruel in equal measure. " I *killed him, beloved."*

She was...destroying him…

"Yo-you were my responsibility. I failed you…"

"Quiet, mi amor. Callado."

Falling limp on the frigid rooftop, he gazed sightlessly as the sky and as she gave a cry of completion above him...he…

Shattered.

Iridescent blue eyes shot open, a scream trapped behind their owner's teeth as he bolted into a sitting position. Cold sweat chilled his skin, his breath leaving him in harsh pants as he

fought through the phantom sensations of icy rain and a cruelly gentle voice.

Ten years and that night continued to haunt him, the curse of his eidetic memory. Worse, his dreams of it had started to merge with the other dark chapters of his past, all of it stirred to life by the recent death (*murder*) of Garrett Jacob Hobbs. He had tried, so hard to put that life behind him.

To put that *night* behind him.

And yet it seemed intent on haunting his every waking moment.

It made him wish that he trusted Hannibal enough to speak of it with him. Made him wish that he didn't see the monster lurking in the man's blood-amber eyes. Feel the creeping tendrils of the silky-sweet manipulations being carefully woven by him.

His lips twitched into a pale imitation of the smile that had once come to him so easily because though he knew he was being manipulated, his stupid heart didn't care. He'd fallen hard for the psychiatrist, and the bastard knew it.

Even as someone else he couldn't escape his attraction to people that could (would) ruin him.

Heaving a shuddering sigh, he slipped from his bed and into the bathroom to shower and prepare for the day.

Only moments later he found himself fully dressed and with his dogs at his side, he began to run, wondering if he would able be able to completely escaped the darkness nipping at his heels.

/

He could see it as soon as Will entered his office.

Shadows, deep and volatile, danced in his...friend's eyes, hunching his shoulders and turning down the corners of his mouth.

Nightmares.

They'd haunted the man the entire time he'd known him. While he knew that Garret Jacob Hobbs featured in many of them, he also knew that there were other things in those dreams that Will refused to share with him.

It was in the way he tended to flinch away from human contact, the way his eyes tracked every entrance in the room, every object that could be used as a weapon.

The way he refused to meet the gazes of anyone he spoke to, almost as if he were aware of the darkness that lurked there and was afraid to show it.

All signs of severe post traumatic stress, the kind associated with significant amounts of trauma.

Continuous trauma.

It was maddening to know that the answer was so close, yet just out of his reach, forever trapped behind the agent's lips.

Maddening, because he couldn't figure out how it would affect his plans.

With a quiet breath, the man took a seat in front of him, lips quirking into a brittle smile.

A broken, wounded expression that looked horribly at home on his face.

"How are you today, Will?" He asked, surprised to hear genuine concern in his own voice, something that hadn't happened since Mischa's death so long ago.

Something that only this fragile man before him seemed to bring out.

For a moment, the agent didn't respond, blue eyes gazing intently over his shoulder. Then in a surprisingly bold move, it moved and locked onto his own, steel winding through the shadows, making it more intense.

Beautiful.

There was something so inherently beautiful about the motion, something alluring in the caged beast hidden in them that he found himself allowing his own to lurk in his eyes in response.

That broken smile curled into a smirk. Will didn't seem to notice.

"I'm fine. Nightmares, no sleepwalking, though."

"Hobbs?" He asked knowingly but the man shook his head.

"No, not last night. I-" He shuddered, expression blanking. "No."

He frowned, blood amber eyes taking note of how the brunette's hand twitched in his lap. "What was it?"

The younger looked away and he found himself mourning the loss of the rarely given eye contact.

"Nothing, I...did you know I was engaged once?"

His eyebrows shot up in response.

Somehow, Will struck him as a more introverted person. While he knew that the man before him was very attractive, it was hard for him to imagine him in any sort of relationship.

It also made his beast give a low, possessive growl because William Graham was ***his*** .

The other gave a raspy chuckle at his expression, though it didn't reach his eyes at all.

"Yeah, she was...amazing. I- she was smart, funny, and we were childhood friends. I really thought, *hoped* we would spend the rest of our lives together."

The possessive growl in his subconscious grew darker and he knew his eyes had flashed. Still he kept the rest of his expression neutral.

"What happened?"

"I cheated."

Hannibal felt the eyebrow rise higher, something in those words ringing false in his ears.

"I'm sorry?"

Will didn't even seem to hear him. "I didn't mean to and I certainly didn't want to, but I must have done something. I must have led her on, or- or something. Why else would it keep happening?"

A dark suspicion began to take hold in his mind and he felt the first stirrings of rage, hot and ugly in his chest.

Still, the younger man continued. "I know its- I *know* it wasn't consensual, but I can't-" his voice broke and his hand clenched into fists in his lap, bright blue eyes clouded.

Before he could stop himself, Hannibal found himself holding the fragile brunette his arms tight like a vice around him. All the while, the beast inside him rage, snarling and furious at what had been done to its mate.

He froze.

Mate?

Will?

No, no he wasn't-

His beast snorted and he pushed the thought away, never noticing how his arms tightened even more around the shattered man he was holding.

"I-I'm so sorry that happened to you, Will." He murmured and his friend trembled, curling closer.

"I deserved it." He replied, voice just as quiet. "Babs, she was furious. Broke things off. Said she was glad it happened then rather than after we were married. Glad she knew that I was too much of a slut to ever remain faithful to her."

This time, he couldn't stop the wordless snarl that left his lips, but Will continued as if he hadn't made a sound. "I stayed with Ca- *her* after that. I didn't have anywhere else to go. Then one day, I woke up and she was gone."

He shuddered. “I probably should’ve been relieved, but all I could feel was abandoned. I left after that. I couldn’t-” The agent cut himself off, his gaze raw and exposed. He seemed to have suddenly realized that he’d said more than he’d probably ever wanted to say.

Hannibal said nothing, allowing the other to stay in his arms until he was composed.

Normally, he’d have pressed the issue, eager to delve deeper into the profiler’s mind. However, with his beast roaring its fury and anguish just below his skin, he couldn’t bring himself to do so. Instead all he could do was try to keep his own facade solid, the urge to feel this ‘Babs’ blood beneath his fingertips and her flesh between his teeth. To have whoever *she* was screaming and pleading for her life beneath his blade as he rendered her flesh from bone and served it to Will on a silver platter.

Yet Will was smart and worse, he knew him better than he realized.

The man had given him no names, no locations.

Nothing .

He couldn’t help but wonder if the man was doing it subconsciously or if he’d finally figured out just what was going on.

Part of him hoped it was the latter, but all the same doubted it.

Finally, his agent pulled away, clearing his throat. “Sorry.”

He gave him a smile, one that was more genuine than those that normally graced his features. “It was no trouble, Will. Are you alright?”

A tiny smile, a faint curl of the lips, crossed the younger man’s worn features as he nodded, before jolting as his phone rang.

Without looking he answered it, resignation taking over, and Hannibal knew who it was before he even managed to speak.

“Jack?”

He watched as the agent’s features darkened even more , before those beautiful blue hues slid shut, their owner withholding a sigh of pure exhaustion.

“I’ll be there.”

Blood-tarnished topaz watched as the man stood, the walls coming back up and slamming back into place as if he’d never let them down. Meeting his...friend’s gaze he nodded and stood to lead him out, listening as he and Jock said their goodbyes. One the call ended, Will turned to him.

“Thank you.”

“No thanks needed. We are friends, Will.”

The man stared at him for a moment, eyes flitting over his features as if seeing something that they hadn’t before. Finally he turned and began to walk away. “Jack wants us both at the crime scene.”

Humming, the psychiatrist followed, inwardly wondering what Will had seen in those few seconds....and how it would affect their continued association, especially with the beast beneath his skin whispering the word mate in his ear.

And if, as they walked to the young agent’s car, his mind pictured them and Abigail hunting together as a family?

Well, that was between him and his mind palace.

Chapter 2

Chapter Two

The past seemed determined to drag him under.

Their victim, surprisingly not one of the Ripper's, had been beaten to death...with a crowbar. He hadn't been there when Joker had done that to Jason all those years ago, but he'd seen the pictures in the investigative file. Had been the one to delete the gruesome images from Bruce's digital copy of the police report if only to spare the man from having to see them.

He'd paid Joker back in full, recreating the injuries on the clown's body with the same crowbar he'd used to kill his brother.

It had been the first time he'd killed a man...and it hadn't been the last. It was only due to Ra's Al Ghul's interference that the Clown still lived, a secret unbeknownst to anyone, including the Big Bat himself.

All the same, as he stared down at the beaten form of their latest victim, he couldn't help but wonder if he should've killed the Clown again. Anything to keep the fanatics that he inspired at bay.

Jack's voice interrupted his thoughts, drawing him from the spiral they'd begun to traverse.

"What can you tell me?"

"The killer is a copycat. Thirteen years ago, the Joker killed Bruce Wayne's adopted son and one of Batman's Robins in a similar way. While the timeframe would usually make this less relevant, the killer also left this." He jerked his head down toward the bloodstained Joker card between the boy's lips, which had been carved into a wide grin.

The older man scowled. "So now in addition to the Ripper we now have a crazy wanna be supervillain on our hands?" He snarled and Will sighed, nodding.

"Looks that way."

Hannibal, who'd been silent until that point hummed softly. "I have done several consultations in the past with Arkham Asylum, particularly on the case of the Joker," He began and Will raised an eyebrow, while Jack continued to glare.

The psychiatrist continued as if he'd never stopped. "The Joker, while highly intelligent, is an extremely chaotic and unpredictable figure. His motivations changed by the moment, however he also does not take well to others "copying" him. According to one of the doctors he said that it took credence away from the original idea."

"Which means that he could end up coming here to take care of the copycat himself if we don't find this guy."

He nodded and Will pinched the bridge of his nose in exasperation, hoping no one saw the brief flash of fear that skittered through his gaze. After all, unlike Hannibal and Jack he was aware of one other absolute truth about The Joker.

Where he went...The Bat followed.

And that was to be avoided at all costs.

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She should regret this.

She really should.

She didn't.

As she clicked another picture of the group standing around their latest case she couldn't help the way her lips curled at the thought of her latest story. She couldn't help the thrill of vindictive pleasure that shot through her as she managed to catch a side profile of Graham's face, full of frustration as he stared down at the victim.

Yes, she had nearly everything she needed...to drag him a little further down.

/

Will was doing worse.

Something about their latest victim had pushed the younger man back behind his shields, had caused him to shut down and worse he couldn't figure out what it was.

It wasn't the Joker, not with Will's background. The Joker, despite being well known worldwide, barely left Gotham and unless the young agent had lived there during his reign. Even now, the Clown was less active, though no less deadly.

Was it the crowbar?

Perhaps.

Despite the darkness lurking behind those crystalline eyes, something told him that the other was not used to that level of pure brutality. As the Ripper, Hannibal prided himself on his ability to turn his savagery into art, something that many that copied him tried to emulate. They failed, but their savagery was… less potent than what they'd seen at their most recent crime scene. He almost wished it had been a scene he himself had set, if only to assimilate his mate to the darkness just that bit faster.

His footsteps faltered as he realized that his mind had betrayed him once more.

Will was *not* his *mate*!

He was...just *his*.

His to break.

To reform.

His.

Vicious, possessive satisfaction curled through him at the thought, before his gaze landed on the object of his thoughts, watching as the slender man seemed to drive them completely on autopilot, clouded eyes trapped by visions only he could see.

It brought his thoughts back to the revelations the other had dropped during their session earlier that day. Of all the demons he'd suspected Will to be hiding in his past, *that* hadn't been one of them. He'd expected moments of anger, maybe even hints of childhood trauma...but-

He needed to find out who they were. Both of them.

He had leads, but not very strong ones.

Babs.

Ca-

His lips curled into a snarl, before he quickly shifted it back into a more pleasant expression. Perhaps it was time he dug a little deeper into his mate's past.

/

Ten years.

It had been ten years since that night and yet, no matter how many times he visited this cold and dreary place he couldn't bring himself to believe it. To believe the lie it represented.

The lie that was slowly looking more and more like the truth.

He remembered clearly, finding his brother's mask tattered and abandoned in a pool of blood. Remembered the pieces of blue and black stained deep crimson in the moonlight.

He remembered the absolute anguish on his father's face when DNA revealed that the blood belonged to the first robin. The way Red Hood, unmasked and pale, had rasped that there was entirely too much blood for it to be anything other than a fatal wound. The way, he himself had lashed out at the suggestion while his father had fallen into just as deep a denial.

Worse, he remembered the aftermath.

He remembered his father's ensuing frantic search for their eldest brother, the way he chased down any lead no matter how preposterous. The hope that chipped and faded with each dead end and the way Hood and Red Robin seemed resigned in a way they shouldn't be. The way Alfred had, quiet and mournful, cleaned the acrobatic equipment in the cave, equipment only ever used by the Blue Bird himself.

The way, after six years of searching, Red Robin finally convinced their father to declare their brother dead. The funeral had been a grand affair on both sides. To the public, Richard Grayson had been missing for five years, kidnapped during a business trip for Wayne industries. However, the entire caped community knew of Nightwing's disappearance from Bludhaven and it had been stunning just how many people turned up to the funeral. Stunning, that there were just as many villains as there were heroes. Ivy, Harley Quinn, even Joker had come, the latter three mourning the bat they had watched grow up. Deathstroke had shown up as well (which, what? How did he even know Nightwing? The Bluebird had never mentioned him…). The mercenary had watched the proceeding with something dangerous brewing in his single visible eye, before vanishing without a word.

Another man, one Damian had vaguely recognized as the Tiger King of Kandahar, had also come, grief in his dark eyes as he lurked on the outskirts. Like Deathstroke, he'd vanished before anyone could question him.

And yet, even after...Bruce hadn't stopped looking. Instead, he'd just gotten better at hiding it from Hood and Red Robin, who seemed determined to move past it all. Hood had taken to patrolling with them, the loss of Nightwing making him grow overprotective of them all, while Red Robin took over the older's work on the Young Justice team as well as his work with the Titans. Only Damian couldn't bring himself to do either. He helped search with Bruce, but he dreaded the discoveries such a search could bring. He feared discovering all their hope was for naught, especially as longer went with not a single trace of his brother being found.

With this, this dreary place and the solid black stone before him the only thing in the older man's place. Placing down the flowers in his hand before the stone, he swallowed thickly, fighting against the burning in his throat and the stinging in his eyes, as his finger brushed the name engraved there.

"You've never given up on us," He whispered softly, and despite his best efforts a tear escaped him. "But everyday Father is drifting further and further away. He's giving up on you, on us. We need you." A shaky breath left him.

"*Please*," And somehow, the irony stung. His brother had tried so hard to draw them all in, and yet every turn they'd pushed him away. Tried to prove that they didn't need him, and yet here he was, begging an empty grave and a silent stone for just a hint of his brother's presence. Even still, he couldn't find the words to say this to the stone, instead, he bowed his head. "*Please*."

/

Dick wasn't dead.

For so long, the thought had been his driving force, though all evidence pointed to the contrary. He knew that his other sons thought he was drowning in his grief and perhaps they were right, but they didn't understand.

Dick was his first child, the one he had raised the longest. He'd never quite stopped seeing him as that tiny six year old sobbing beside his parents' bodies, or the angry hurting fifteen

year old that had returned to him from Jump City after the founding of the Titans. He never forgot the first time he'd seen the teen shirtless after he'd returned home, seen the thick ropes of scarring that marred his back and the way he'd shut down when Bruce had asked.

Of all his children, Dick was the one that he was closest to, not because he was the Golden child everyone thought he was, but because he'd been the one to teach him how to open his heart without breaking. To show him what it meant to be a family after so long without one.

Even as the child had grown, had become harder and stronger over the years, emotions hidden behind the veneer of happiness and warmth that managed to hide his darkness so well, they'd remained close. Close enough that he knew his son had been verging on the edge for a while before his disappearance. Enough that he couldn't help doubting that his son was dead, even as everyone around him seemed to think otherwise.

Yet now, as he stared at the screen before him, he found himself suddenly glad that he'd held on to his ever waning hope with as much white knuckled tenacity as his battered soul could muster.

TattleCrime was something of an indulgence that he only truly read when he wanted to be able to rant in the peace of his own mind about poor journalism. He had logged on at the alert of her newest article, heart heavy after another dead end lead, hoping to put it from his mind for just the littlest while only for his heart to launch itself into his throat as he caught sight of the cover photo.

Ten years, and so many changed and yet he recognized his son immediately. His hair was curly in a way it hadn't been since he'd started to cut it short as a child, blue eyes focused under thin rimmed glasses. He'd grown his facial hair into a scruffy five o'clock shadow, something he'd always kept clean shaven, and even in the photo he looked exhausted, but it was him.

Unbidden, a sob of pure relief left him, startling his sons who'd been sparing behind him.

"Father?" Damian questioned hesitantly, but he couldn't bring himself to look away from the picture on the screen.

"I found him." He whispered and one of them gave a sharp gasp.

"I found him."

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

> Will thought he was getting better. Hannibal can't make up his mind. Jason has feels. And Jack might be intimidated by the Waynes (He is. He really is.).

Chapter Three

Master was angry with him.

The whip came down once, then twice, sending blinding flashes of pain across his back and he bit his lip harshly to prevent himself from screaming.

No noise or Master would add another fifteen lashes.

Another strike.

What had he done?

He'd followed his orders this time, even when his former team had shown up and confronted him while he went after his target.

He hadn't even held back. (At least not enough that it should've been noticed.)

So why?

A final strike landed, harder than all of the others and a nearly inaudible gasp left his lips as his vision blurred with the force of it.

Behind him, a single dark eye flashed, even as the owner finally placed the whip down and moved to stand in front of him, a gloved hand gripping his chin bruisingly.

"*Do not disobey me again," The man rumbled, his voice mild, almost deceptively passive.*

He trembled, feeling the blood on his back beginning to cool, and yet still, his mouth ran away from him.

"*I didn't-"*

The mercenary's eye went cold, the low light of the safehouse giving him an almost sinister aura as it glinted off of his mask.

"*You held back. Do it again and I won't be so lenient."*

He bowed his head, only to gasp as a sudden surge of electricity shook him.

He screamed.

And distantly, he heard his Master walking away, voice echoing behind him.

"*A little incentive."*

The surge grew stronger, setting his blood alight in his veins, and black spots began to cloud his vision.

As they dragged him into the darkness, the room around him warped until he found himself looking into the eyes of a ravenstag with blood-topaz eyes. Then-

He was awake.

Panting heavily, he shivered as the cool night air hit his sweat-slicked skin, tremors shaking his frame. Pain, near blinding in the aftermath of the nightmare, licked at his feet, and he looked down to find that he wasn't wearing shoes.

Nor pants.

It had happened again.

A harsh sob escaped his lips unbidden and he wrapped his arms around himself in a pale imitation of a hug, bloodless fingers clenched tight in the fabric of his shirt.

He'd thought he was getting better.

He *was*.

His nightmares, while numerous, were more about the demons in his past than Hobbs, and it had been almost a week since his last episode like this.

So why did this waking in the middle of a road, barefoot and half-dressed, feel like failure?

Why did it feel like he was falling?

Sobbing harder he curled in on himself, and tried not to feel like he was drowning. When his legs gave way, he merely curled in on himself, not bothering to move.

Hours passed.

Or perhaps, it had only been minutes, though his tears had long since gone dry, his gaze empty as it stared ahead.

Distantly, he was aware of a car pulling up nearby, of a voice and gentle hands.

A blurry face obscured his vision, but he rarely noticed. Instead, he uttered the only words that made sense.

"H-hannibal. C-call Hannibal."

/

Whoever was calling was going to end up on his table.

Glaring at the blaring device on his bed stand, he debated the merits of answering it. Very rarely did people call his cellphone, and even fewer would be so bold as to call him so early in the morning.

Deciding that it would be more rude to ignore the call, he answered the call, using every bit of his hard-won control to keep his annoyance from his voice.

"This is Dr. Lecter speaking."

An unfamiliar voice, young and full of concern responded on the other end. "Good morning, Dr. Lecter. This is Officer Montoya of the Wolftrap police department. We're calling on behalf of your patient Agent William Graham."

Alarm raced through him and he slowly sat up. "Will? Is he alright?"

The officer hummed. "We found Agent Graham sleepwalking. He was nearly catatonic when we got to him, but has become more responsive over the past few minutes. He requested that we call you."

"May I speak to him?"

"Of course. One moment."

There was a bit of shuffling, then finally Will sounded on the other end, his voice exhausted.

"Hannibal," He greeted and there was something in his voice like defeat.

It wasn't as satisfactory as it should've been.

"Will," He responded. "Are you alright? Do you need me to come pick you up?"

The younger man was silent for a moment. "I don't know." Lost, and empty and Hannibal felt a mild stirring of alarm.

He'd never heard the man sound like that, not even after he'd revealed what had happened with his engagement and now that he'd heard it, he found that he never wanted to hear it again.

His beast snarled in agreement and he let his voice soften the way it only seemed to when the young agent was around.

"Go with Officer Montoya. I will be there shortly."

His mate (*he is not*-) muttered an agreement, then almost as an afterthought, a soft 'thank you' before the call ended with a click. Frowning, he stood and got dressed, unable to shake the unease that had crept into his consciousness.

In the near nine months that he'd known Will, he hadn't heard the younger man sound anything like he had on the phone. Instead, the man, while nearly always exhausted, was exceedingly stubborn and at times rude enough that Hannibal couldn't help but wonder how he hadn't yet ended up on his table. He was snarky, his sarcasm and wit biting and his humor dry, something he seemed to only show when they were alone.

Hearing his voice during the call, lost and defeated hadn't been what he'd envisioned when he imagined breaking his...friend. And worse, even if it had been, this didn't feel like a victory.

No.

It didn't feel like a victory at all, and Hannibal refused to accept it.

Snarling wordlessly, he wondered if it had anything to do with the information his search into Will's past had managed to drag up.

Well, the *only* information of Will's past he had managed to find.

Until ten years ago, William Graham didn't exist.

His past as a police officer was accurate and he had worked in Louisiana, and it had been noted in his file that his true background was classified, but other than that, he could find no financial records, school records, nothing on William Graham.

It was frustrating and brought on too many unknown variables because as the days progressed, more of a past he knew nothing about seemed eager to interfere in his plans for *his* Agent.

He needed to figure out what was going on, otherwise the past would shatter Will before he even had a chance to...and that was a defeat he refused to suffer.

/

Goldie was alive.

When they had discovered the Bluebird's mask, tattered and lying in a pool of blood, he hadn't wanted to believe it.

Dick was his older brother, the first person outside of his mother and Bruce to look at him and find him worthy of affection, of something *good*. Sure, they'd gotten off to a rocky start, especially right after Bruce had adopted him. Dick had been hurt, and angry because he'd been there for over nine years and was still only Bruce's ward, while Jason- Bruce had adopted Jason almost immediately. Dick hadn't understood why he hadn't done the same for him, and Bruce in his normal emotionally stunted way had tried to explain and only made things worse. Dick found out that Jason was the new Robin and had left furious and heartbroken.

He'd never even learned that Bruce had gotten adoption papers drawn up for him when he'd gone to adopt Jason.

Instead, he'd run to Jump and founded the Titans and Jason- well he couldn't help feeling like his new brother hated him now. Alfred had sat him down and explained that Robin was special to Dick, and that by passing it down without asking Bruce had hurt him deeply. He'd explained that Dick wasn't angry at *him,* he was just hurt.

He'd been right.

Within a month of leaving, his brother had called him, apologizing and they were back on track.

Then Jason had died.

He'd come back and Dick was back at home, but he was no longer Robin. Instead, Bruce had adopted another kid, this one the Drake kid that Dick used to babysit. Suddenly, he could understand the hurt his older brother had felt, especially when he realized neither of them had avenged him.

Joker was still free.

Still *alive*.

He'd raged, because even if *Bruce* hadn't avenged him, he'd hoped his brother would. Hoped that the passion that drove him would be enough to drive his big brother to killing the clown that had taken him from his family.

It was only when it was all over that he realized that maybe, just maybe he had.

"*Well, this certainly brings back memories."*

Joker had said when he'd struck him with that crowbar, and for a moment he'd believe the man was taunting him.

"*Too bad, you're not as scary as the other one."*

He'd wanted to ask. Had tried, but Joker had only laughed and later, when he'd asked Dick his brother had waved him off, Bruce frowning in the background.

"*Don't worry about it."*

He hadn't asked again, but the need to know had never gone away. Afterwards, it had seemed like there was never time to.

Dick had moved to Bludhaven and was working as a cop, Tim had moved on to the Titans, then Damian came into their lives and Bruce was gone.

Then just after, Dick had vanished, returning nearly a year later, new shadows hidden behind a brittle smile.

Only a month later, Blockbuster was dead and Bludhaven was in ruins.

Dick had only been back in Gotham for two nights before they found his mask in that pool of blood.

He hadn't wanted to believe it.

But he'd always been a realist and there was no way even his big brother could survive that much blood loss. He'd watched, heart aching, as Damian and Bruce spiraled deeper in denial, both sure the bluebird was alive, yet dreading the evidence pointing to otherwise. He couldn't bring himself to hope like that, not after seeing evidence that doing so was foolish.

And yet-

Here they were, on a plane to Virginia.

On their way to Quantico, to the FBI headquarters where their brother *worked*.

Where he was *alive*.

He'd never been so relieved.

Nor so *pissed*.

How could he do this?

How could he be alive, but never come home?

How could he let them believe that he was *gone*?

He didn't know, but he hoped like hell that the bastard had an explanation, because after he hugged him...he was gonna punch him straight in his fucking face.

/

"You need to rest, Will."

He rolled his eyes at Hannibal's worried words, listening to the man move around his sitting room while he, himself, was getting dressed in his bedroom.

The psychiatrist had been hovering over him since his sleepwalking incident two nights previous, going as far as insisting that he stay the night so he could ensure that Will wasn't sleep walking. Worse, he'd actually given the mildly logical argument of having a better security system than Will's and insisting that his house would be more difficult to escape.

He hadn't had the heart to tell the man that he'd grown up escaping harder, nor that he'd been trained to do so. Instead, he'd finally accepted, taking over the man's guest bedroom.

After all, he did get free breakfast out of it, and no one could say that Hannibal wasn't an amazing chef.

"I'm fine." he responded, finally slipping from his room. "I'm only teaching today. Jack has a guest coming, so he's occupied. Which means no cases, and less stress."

Hannibal sent him a narrow-eyed glance, then, to his surprise, heaved a soft sigh. Very rarely, did the man break his composure.

"Very well. Shall I bring you lunch?"

He blinked. "You don't have to."

"It is for my own peace. Perhaps, you can join Abigail and I. I am picking her up from Port Haven today."

He smiled. "Your guardianship papers came back?"

The other nodded, a tiny smile curling those thin lips and *oh*.

He should smile more often.

The warmth in his chest at the sight more than agreed with the notion.

"Indeed. Perhaps I can bring us a celebratory lunch."

Realizing the man wouldn't be deterred he nodded. "Okay."

Blood stained topaz warmed and he fought away the blush that wanted to overtake him at the sight. The older man hummed.

"Very well, I'll see you at lunch." Thin lips brushed across his own almost absently and he left only to freeze as he reached his car.

Hannibal had kissed him.

Unbeknownst to him, Hannibal froze the moment the door closed, his own eyes wide.

Had he just-

His beast rumbled deep within his conscious and he knew without a doubt that it was laughing at him.

Shaking his head, he began to prepare to retrieve Abigail, the phantom taste of Will lingering on his lips.

/

Bruce Wayne.

The man, for all that the media portrayed him as an air headed playboy, cut an

Intimidating figure as he entered his office, followed by two men and a teenager. His dark hair had the beginnings of silver at the temples, making him seem distinguished rather than

aging, his blue eyes intense as they met his own.

Beside him stood his second eldest son, Jason, jade eyes harsh as they gazed around curiously. He was built stockier than his father, but stood at nearly the same height, dark hair shorn short, and a tuft of white hair falling in his eyes. His younger brother stood behind him, clutching a cup of coffee with the same fanaticism he'd seen Will clutch his own. Dark bags lingered under his eyes, his dark hair cut short on the sides, unkempt at the top. It was enough to remind him of the rumors he'd heard that the boy was one of the most ruthless CEOs to deal with.

Finally bringing up the rear was the youngest Wayne, only nineteen or so. His hair neatly combed, blue eyes colder than he'd ever seen on another human, lips turned down slightly at the corners. He was lean, but lithely muscled, standing just below his father in height.

All in all, they made for an impressive picture, even Jason, the only of the four not wearing a suit. Instead he wore a loose black t-shirt and a battered blue leather jacket, seemingly out of place in the group of formally dressed men.

When his supervisor had informed him of their arrival, he hadn't believed her. He wasn't sure whether he regretted doing so or not.

Gesturing for them to take a seat, he leaned forward. "What can we do for you, gentlemen?"

The Wayne patriarch pursed his lips. "My son, Damian, was intending to pursue an internship here. However, further research revealed that the majority of the intern classes are taught by professor Graham."

Jack frowned. "I take it you've read Tattlecrime."

"I have, I find myself concerned about sending my son to learn under a man believed to be unstable. Commissioner Hart has given me permission to sit in on one of Mr. Graham's lessons to "judge for myself".

"Agent Graham is one of my best. However, I can understand your concern. Luckily, he's in class now, so we may be able to catch him before his lunch."

Wayne nodded, and something unidentifiable flashed in his eyes. Standing, he led the group from the room, idly wondering at the tension lining each of their shoulders.

/

He was so close.

Heart in his throat, he fought not to let his hands tremble as he and his children followed Jack Crawford to his son's classroom.

Ten years, and much of it believing his son was dead and soon he would have undeniable proof that said otherwise. Would finally be able to ask all the questions lurking behind the relief and grief.

Swallowing thickly, he took a deep breath as they reached the classroom glancing at the others. They looked just as nervous as he was.

They stepped into the doorway of the room, finding two others already waiting. One was a man he was vaguely associated with, an old acquaintance named Hannibal Lecter. The other was a young girl, not much older than Damian, with long dark hair and wide doe like eyes. Jack frowned at her, then at Hannibal, but Bruce ignored them, his gaze drawn into the classroom, more specifically the man speaking at the front.

He was focused, hadn't yet noticed them, explaining the merits of psychoanalyzing and warning of allowing bias to influence that analysis. It was only after he dismissed his class that he noticed and walked over to them, blue eyes so familiar they hurt.

This was his son. He truly was alive.

He was hugging him before he could stop himself.

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNING: Mildly graphic Panic Attack at the beginning of the chapter.

Chapter Four

He couldn't breathe.

Someone's arms were around him, strong and somehow both familiar and not, and if he were anyone else he may have found comfort in them, in their warmath…

Yet all he could feel was panic.

It made his skin crawl, his lungs burning with the air denied to them and his throat clogged with too many emotions to name and *he still couldn't breathe.*

Was he dying again?

Distantly, he could hear Jack's voice, could feel the unfamiliar (*familiarfamiliarfamiliar*) reluctantly releasing him. He jolted back, his back slamming into the wall behind him, a cornered noise leaving his throat. He was shaking he realized, his body trembling, heart racing, and he still couldn't- couldn't-

"Breathe, Will."

Hannibal.

Locking eyes with the psychiatrist's blood-topaz eyes he gave a sharp inhale, then released it far too quickly, a spluttering cough leaving him.

"Again."

He tried once more this time more successfully than the first and a small measure of warmth lit the older man's gaze, so he tried again.

And again.

Slowly he felt his breath settling into something almost calm and he nodded to the man in thanks, an embarrassed flush dancing across his cheeks.

"Sorry." He rasped and the other sent him a look he couldn't decipher. His retort was cut off by another voice, one that sent chills down his spine.

"No, I should be sorry." His eyes snapped up and met familiar ice blue ones, just as piercing as they'd always been but full of that same apologetic glimmer they always got when the other couldn't figure out how to apologize.

"Bruce?" He breathed, before suddenly taking in the others accompanying the man. Tim and Damian both wore smart suits, looking so much older than he remembered, Jason tagging behind wearing a jacket that he vaguely remembered as his own. To the left of them stood Abigail, watching him with concern in her eyes, a look vaguely echoed in Jack's eyes as he glared at Bruce darkly.

"I'm sorry," The older man continued softly. "I just- you were *dead,* chum."

His lips quirked into a mirthless smile, before he glanced at Jack.

"What are they doing here?"

"Wayne read TattleCrime and wanted to sit in on your classes to make sure you weren't crazy since his son is supposed to be coming here in the summer...or at least that's what he said before he attacked you."

"Perhaps," Hannibal interrupted, helping the young agent straighten, "it would be better if we took this inside your office, Jack. I have a feeling this will be a long discussion and I see no reason why we can't have it over lunch."

Jack's eyes lit up. "Did you cook?"

The psychiatrist gave him that same polite smile he normally gave, even as offense flashed in his eyes. "Of course."

"Who the hell are you?" Jason asked and something in his friend's eyes tightened, still he answered in that bland tone he used when he was forced to deal with rude people.

"I'm his psychiatrist...and his friend."

He blushed slightly, their kiss from earlier that morning flashing through his mind. Still, he followed as they were led back to Jack's office, trying as hard as possible not to feel the stares of his family searing themselves into his skin.

/

"What the hell is going on, Graham?!" Jack barked the moment the door closed.

Will heaved a heavy sigh, his shoulders slumping slightly, and Hannibal found himself angry at the sight.

"Remember how when I was first hired, we had a talk about my file. My real name and everything connected to it were redacted."

"You said it was for your protection."

"Yes. My real name is Richard Grayson. After an...incident I was gravely injured and I used it as an opportunity to fake my death. A friend of mine helped me set up a new identity and I joined the Louisiana police force. The rest you know."

"Why?"

Will stared at him, and Hannibal could see the way he was pondering what he could say. Apparently he took too long because one of Wayne's sons interrupted, this time the youngest, his jade eyes burning.

"We mourned for you! Father and I have been searching for you!"

The agent tilted his head, something dark flashing in his gaze too briefly for Hannibal to decipher.

"Why?" He echoed, voice faint and Hannibal could hear something there. Something brittle. Then he blinked and looked away, shoulders slumping slightly and Hannibal felt his own hackles rising. He knew he should've kept the stubborn man away from work today. "I was tired."

"Then go to sleep!" Jason exploded, "Don't make your family believe that you died!"

Hannibal's beast snarled within his mind, especially when he caught the nearly too brief glimpse of *guilt* in his mate's eyes. A sudden, dangerous thought struck him.

"How long after?" He asked mildly.

Will stiffened, aware of what he was asking despite the time that had passed since he'd dared to reveal that sordid tale to his f- *Hannibal*.

"Three days."

The older man's polite expression didn't waver but he could see the rage that flashed in the depths of those blood-tinged amber eyes. Before it could be addressed, Jack's phone rang.

The director answered it, his lips curling down in a scowl as the person on the other side spoke. After a moment he snapped it shut and looked up at Will.

"Our copycat left another one."

The profiler nodded, then turned to his family. "Looks like we'll need to put this *happy* family reunion on hold. Here," He scribbled his address onto a post-it note and handed it to Bruce.

"That's my address. We can talk more when I get home. You know where I'm likely to have hidden the spare key."

Hannibal cut it. "Actually, why don't Mr. Wayne and his sons come with me and Abigail? You were going to come over for dinner tonight to celebrate my guardianship of Abigail, after all."

The brunette sent him a thankful look. "Probably for the best. Winston still isn't good with guests, I'm not too sure about the others."

He nodded, sending his ma-*patient* a wary look. "Be careful, Will. You are still recovering."

The other sent him an unreadable look then he and Jack turned to leave. Hannibal followed, inwardly lamenting that they still hadn't touched the celebratory lunch he'd made. Still, as he noted the Wayne family following behind him, it was unlikely that it would go to waste. And perhaps he would be able to find out more about the past Will was hiding from.

/

Jason was...confused.

Since discovering Goldie was alive, he'd been vacillating between relief and anger, torn between hugging his brother and hitting him. He'd been furious to realize that their brother was off living his life while they were all mourning him, and yet after meeting William Graham, he couldn't help but wonder if the other man had died after all.

Seeing the way he'd flown into a panic attack as Bruce had hugged him, the way he wouldn't meet the eyes of anyone in the room during their entire conversation...it tugged at something deep in him. After all, of all of them, Dick had been the most touch-positive, always hugging or leaning on someone. He seemed incapable of living without them, mood noticeably less bright when he was denied them for too long. Graham seemed to be the opposite, cringing away from touch as if it burned, blue eyes wild in their panic and it was-

He never wanted to see that again.

Then there was the psychiatrist, Hannibal.

Something about the man had set off the red flags in his mind as soon as he'd seen him, not helped by the dark gleam of possessiveness that had flashed in his eyes when Bruce had hugged Dick. He doubted anyone else had seen the slight snarl that had curled the man's thin lips before being masked with that vaguely polite expression, red-gold eyes hiding something dark and hungry.

He'd talked their brother down from the panic attack calmly, and despite identifying himself as the man's psychiatrist, had continued to watch him with that same possessiveness.

As if Dick were *his* prey.

And worse, Dick seemed to be able to see it...and was doing nothing.

It did nothing to help Jason's confusion.

He glanced at the girl that so far had said little about the proceedings, only to find her watching them with curiosity and something else. When she found him looking back she raised an eyebrow, then turned away.

"You can follow me in your car." Hannibal rumbled as they reached his car. Bruce nodded, icy gaze unreadable.

"Thank you, Dr. Lecter."

The man nodded and they went back to their own car. The moment they were inside, the Bat tapped a button on the dash. Jason knew what he was going to say the moment he did, and while normally he protested Bruce's actions on principle, he couldn't help but agree. After all, he was just as curious.

"Oracle, find everything you can on Dr. Hannibal Lecter."

/

They'd found Dick.

After years of mourning, of believing that her last words to her former fiancee had been a mix of hurtful slurs and angry, bitter remarks, they'd finally found him.

He'd been alive this entire time, and honestly, she wasn't sure how she felt about it.

Staring at the picture from the TattleCrime article that Bruce had sent her, she stared hard at the man, taking in the familiar blue eyes and dark hair, even if she'd never seen it so curly before. The scruffy facial hair was new, as were the glasses, his ever present smile missing from his too tired face.

The years hadn't been kind to him. Had worn him down in a way their work never had, leaving him with an exhaustion that was present even through the photograph.

And yet, he was still as handsome as he'd been all those years ago.

She'd missed him, even when she'd been angry about him cheating on her with Tarantula. When he'd returned to Gotham after Bludhaven had been destroyed, she hadn't been able to resist asking where Tarantula had gone. The deep seated pain and abandonment in his eyes had only made her angrier and she hadn't been able to stop herself from storming away without waiting for a response.

Tim called her three days later.

Nightwing's mask had been found in a pool of his blood, too much not to be fatal.

She'd cried herself to sleep that night, apologizing to the ghost of the man she'd lost. Had begged him to return, even if her anger about his affair hadn't gone away.

And now...he was back, and just as much of a trouble magnet as before.

Trouble that, if the information she'd found on Hannibal was correct, he was very much underprepared for. A cannibalistic serial killer that was so good at covering his tracks that he'd never been convicted. A man so well connected that he could kill them with very little consequences. It was only because she was looking that she'd found the clues at all.

And he was Dick's psychiatrist.

"Oh Dick," she breathed. "What have you gotten yourself into?"

/

"They found me."

A soft sigh sounded on the other end of the line, a dark voice following. It still sent chills down his spine, even if he'd long since moved past the worst of his fear.

"Do you need me to help?"

He took a shuddered breath, crystalline slipping closed for a moment before opening and hardening with cold determination.

"Not this time. I think- I think it's time I stop running."

The voice chuckled, responding with barely veiled jealousy.

"And you don't want to leave your pet monster."

"Slade-"

"It's fine...he's only doing what I've wanted to. Be careful, Kid."

He nodded, squaring his shoulders at the thought of what he was about to do, the things that would soon be revealed.

"I will."

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNING: Mentioned/implied Suicidal thoughts and suicide ideation. Attempted Suicide! PLEASE MIND THE WARNING!

Chapter Five

The sad thing is, he hadn't originally planned to start over.

His plan, crafted with all the rage, all the pain, and sheer despair left in the wake of Catalina's abandonment had been to end it.

He'd gone out that night desperate for the numbness he'd remembered grasping only briefly before joining Spyral, craving an end to all the pain the universe had seemed eager to heap upon him. He'd sought out one of the many gangs in Gotham and had purposely dove into the fight outnumbered...and outgunned.

Still, he'd taken them all out, ignoring every bullet that ripped into his skin, the blood pooling at his feet. He'd stumbled from the warehouse, into an alley just a block away, before finally the dark had taken him.

He'd thought that was the end.

Then he'd awakened to find Wintergreen staring down at him, concern marring his weathered features. Worse, Slade stood behind the man, single visible eye full of dark fury, the likes of which he'd never seen the man direct on anyone, even at the worst of his "apprenticeship".

"*What the **fuck** happened tonight?" The mercenary had snarled, voice sending shivers of fear down his spine.*

He turned his head away, shame and regret thick in his throat.

How did one fail at taking their own life?

A gloved hand reached out, grabbing his face bruisingly tight and forcing him to face the furious man .

"*What. Was. That?"*

He wanted to stay silent, wanted to remain as stubborn as he'd always been, but suddenly he was just-

He was so tired.

His eyes burned, full of tears of pain and exhaustion, his entire body trembling with the effort of holding the bout of weakness back in front of the man that would only turn it against.

Please.

He just wanted it to be over.

Please.

Please!

Above him that furious expression had faded into one of confusion and a sense of horrified concern, something so very rare from the man wearing it. Then the anger was back, tinged with a familiar spark of possession.

"*Oh, Little Bird," He rumbled, and the hand gripping his face loosened slightly to caress his cheek. "This isn't what I wanted. No one,* ***no one,*** *is allowed to break you but me."*

The words escaped him before he could stop them, the feeling of fear warring with warmth in his mind the most familiar feeling he'd grasped all week even tinged by the drowningpleasepleasepleasedespair he still felt.

"*I told her to stop."*

The tightening of that eye made panic spark in his gut, because Slade didn't believe him.

Babs hadn't either.

Neither had Kori.

And each time it had left him more shattered.

Please.

"*I told her to stop." He insisted, and to his horror the tears he'd been holding back finally slipped from his grasp, carving trails down hollow cheeks until they landed on the mercenary's glove. "I did! Master, I told her to stop. I told her to stop. I- I-"*

"*Breathe, Apprentice."*

He choked.

"*Again."*

He tried, spluttering and Slade eyed him for a moment, then glanced at Wintergreen.

"*Contact William Graham." Wintergreen nodded and left the room.*

He looked up with blurry eyes. "The base B guard?" He rasped and the mercenary nodded.

"*If the Bat can't learn to take care of his children then he doesn't need them. Besides, if I remember, you were fond of Will."*

He frowned.

"*I'm twenty-six. I don't need a guardian."*

"*And yet only six hours ago I found you bleeding in an alley from self-inflicted by proxy bullet wounds." The man's eye narrowed into a glare, his hand tightening briefly.*

"*No one kills you but **me."***

He'd been stunned (and terrified), but nothing could be worse than the half life he'd been living. Besides, he was almost certain that Slade would not be so kind to him if he attempted to reach oblivion again.

So he'd taken the new life as a second chance.

William Graham Sr. had been one of Slade's employees and had taken a liking to him while he'd been Slade's unwilling man had treated him like a favored nephew,bringing him games and snacks (even when he was being punished). He had whispered once that if he could, he would take Dick away from Slade. Unfortunately, the man's wife had been gravely ill and Slade was his best bet at getting the money for her treatment.

Still, Dick had been fond of the man, and when Slade had crafted his new identity they'd agreed for him to be the man's estranged son.

No one had questioned it.

And he'd started to heal.

Not completely, but he'd tried to move past it all.

Then Graham had died, and he'd fled. He'd tried to bury himself in his work and his dogs and now-

Now, it was all trying to drag him back into that dark, dark place.

A shuddered breath left his lips, and he pressed the heels of his palm into his eyes to stem the tears burning beneath his eyelids. He wouldn't crumble, not now.

And definitely not in front of them.

Squaring his shoulders, he forced it all down, under that layer of calm and cold that he only used in the direst of situations. Taking another deep breath, he finally exited the car, the grand majesty of Hannibal's home seemingly looming over him in the same manner that Wayne manor had every time he was in trouble.

Despite his best efforts, his hand trembled as he approached the door and he entertained the briefest thought of running. Of going home to his dogs and the peaceful quiet of the forest

surrounding his home.

Of going anywhere but into this house where the ghosts of his past and the demons of his present were waiting to converge on him.

Instead, he grasped the doorknob and twisted it, trying not to feel the way his entire being went numb as the door opened.

/

She was confused...and actually kind of angry.

She'd left Port Haven with Hannibal earlier that day, excited to visit Will at work for their celebratory lunch. After all, in the four months since her parents' deaths they'd grown close. She'd been reluctant at first, but as she spent more time with him, she found herself coming to look at both him and Hannibal as parental figures.

Of course this was helped along by the very obvious feelings the two had for each other, something she tried to actively encourage by forcing them to spend more time together.

She hadn't expected for things to go like this.

Nothing had prepared her for Bruce Wayne and his sons showing up as they were waiting for Will's class to let out. Nor had she been prepared for the multi billionaire to hug the skittish man and send him headfirst into a panic attack.

She definitely hadn't been prepared to learn that Will was actually the late Richard Grayson.

Now as she helped Hannibal in the kitchen, the Wayne family seated in the living room where they'd been waiting for Will, she found herself worried for her skittish guardian. There had to be a reason he'd faked his own death.

A good one.

She glanced up at Hannibal, noticing the darkness gleaming in his eyes. She shuddered.

Hopefully, Wayne and his son's didn't trigger Will again. She wasn't sure they'd be leaving alive if they did.

/

Damian was...nervous.

As they sat in the living room of Dr. Lecter's home, he couldn't help the nerves pooling in his gut, though he fought to keep them from his face.

Like his father, he had searched for his eldest brother for so long. He had hoped that the other was alive even when believing so had caused more pain than visiting that cold marble stone.

Yet, he hadn't expected William Graham.

William Graham, who had refused to meet the eyes of anyone in the room, who flinched away from physical contact as if it burned. William Graham who looked haunted and exhausted in a way he'd never seen in his brother.

Then there was the psychiatrist, Dr. Lecter.

There was something about the man, a darkness not unlike what he remembered from the most dangerous of his grandfather's assassins. He watched them with the same indulgence a predator watched its prey, and yet there was a possessiveness in his eyes when they landed on Grayson. One that said he would fight them if they tried to take him back.

In the three hours since they'd left the FBI building, the man had been nothing but polite, giving vague roundabout answers to their questions, before he'd excused himself to cook dinner. They had taken their seats in the living room, watching him and what seemed to be his daughter moved about the kitchen fixing a dish he didn't recognize.

Beside him, his father watched as well, the faint furrowing of his brow revealing that they'd yet to hear back from Oracle, and he found himself just as tense at the thought.

At least, until a soft sound hit his ears.

Glancing up, he watched as Grayson entered the house, seemingly more exhausted than he'd been when they'd last seen him. His hands trembled as he closed the door, and continued to do so despite him clenching them into fists.

For a moment, the older man just stared at them all, his body tensing as if he wanted to flee, before Lecter's voice cut through the tension.

"Did everything go alright?"

His brother started, his blue eyes snapping in the direction of the kitchen before he sighed.

"Yeah. We found him, he was lingering around the latest crime scene as a bystander."

Lecter hummed, and turned fully to face the brunette. "And you know as well as I, that is not what I was asking, Will."

Grayson scowled, crystalline eyes flashing. "Hannibal, Don't."

The psychiatrist paused for a moment, then glanced at their guests.

"Come, dinner is ready. We may talk afterwards." He turned to go back into the kitchen. "Will can lead you to the dining room."

Damian frowned, watching his brother who's jaw tensed at the words. Then the man turned to them.

"C'mon."

"Dick-" Drake began but Grayson cut him off.

"Will. I haven't been Dick Grayson in a long time."

Taking a seat at the dining table they were led to, they had little time to say anything else as Lecter entered the room, the girl he'd introduced as Abigail trailing behind him, both carrying several plates, a dish for each of them

He paid little attention as the man presented what he'd cooked, choosing to watch his brother. His heart clenched as he found the other was staring down at the table, expression blank.

Lecter sent him a worried glance, then left once more, returning with an expensive bottle of red wine and several glasses.

"Will?" Grayson jolted, his gaze snapping up, and to his shock, met the psychiatrist's gaze, the first time he'd seen him do so since they'd found him. For a moment, he stared at the man, then he blinked rapidly, something like defeat flashing in his eyes.

"Sorry."

"It is no problem." Damian sent his brother another worried glance then took a bite of his food, stilling as the flavor of the meat hit his tongue. Across from him Todd did the same, turning wide eyes on Grayson.

"Holy *shit*, Dickhead. How the hell did you find a cook better than *Alfred?*!"

Grayson huffed, a tiny smile twitching at the corners of his lips while Lecter preened and scowled in equal measure. Their father chuckled, taking a bite of his own food, and his eyes widened in secret agreement though Damian knew he'd never speak the words out loud. After all, their father had grown up fanatically loyal to Pennyworth's cooking and Grayson was much the same. Before this moment, Damian had understood, having found the man's culinary talent unmatched...until now.

"Is it?" Lecter asked, glancing at Will who shrugged. "I wouldn't know. *You've* never made me cookies. Alfred's cookies have yet to be challenged." The tiny smile on the man's lips grew into something more genuine, though still nowhere near the carefree grins Damian had missed. "And I've always been told to judge a person's cooking by their cookies."

Father flushed slightly at his words. "I told you that when you were seven."

Beside him, the girl, Abigail, snickered. "You didn't strike me as someone with a sweet tooth, Will."

Todd snorted. "Goldie would eat cereal for every meal if he could. Never been so scared as I was when I was first adopted by Bruce and I walked into the kitchen to find my new brother on top of the fridge debating which cereal he could eat without getting in trouble with Alfred."

Lecter's lips curled in distaste. "Processed food, Will?"

The brunette snorted into his plate. "Don't food snob me, Hannibal." He replied, and when he looked up, Damian felt the pain he'd been holding onto ease slightly. The shadows had

lessened, if only a bit.

Then he remembered the conversation waiting for them after their meal and ice pooled in his chest. The darkness would be back, he was sure of it. Yet he wanted to enjoy this just a little bit longer.

/

Dinner ended far too soon for Hannibal's liking.

He had enjoyed watching Will interact with his family, watching the shadows haunting him flee for just a moment, as his brothers shared stories about his youth. Like most of the world, he'd been aware when the Wayne heir had vanished and turned up dead, but until earlier that day he'd given it little thought. Now however, as he sat in the living room with the Wayne family and his mate, he found the piece of the puzzle he'd been missing. A month before his disappearance, there had been an announcement that Grayson's engagement had been called off due to a suspected affair with an FBI agent.

The names of the women involved fit the nickname and the foregone word completely.

Babs- Barbara Gordon, Grayson's former fiancee.

Ca- Catalina Flores, the FBI agent in question.

If this were the case, he knew the names of the Ripper's next victims. He just had to figure out a plan to get to them.

Beneath his skin, The Beast howled, teeth bared in a sickening parody of a grin.

/

He didn't want to do this.

Even as he sat in Hannibal's living room, the man sitting in silence beside him, he couldn't bring himself to speak. It was as if the words were on the tip of his tongue, but something was holding them there.

"Perhaps, it would be best to begin from the beginning, Will. They will not understand your reasoning otherwise."

He shivered, the thought of exposing one of his darkest secrets making bile pool in his throat, especially when he thought of their reaction.

"I- I can't."

Bruce leaned forward. "What's going on, Dick? Talk to me, chum."

He shook his head. "I- I *can't*." His hands trembled, nausea making his inside roil violently.

"I...Can I start somewhere else?"

Hannibal nodded. "Wherever you like."

"I didn't- I wasn't going to fake my death originally. I went out, hoping I'd get mugged or-or something. I just...I wanted it all to stop." He looked away. "I got my wish. Six gunshots total. Three in the chest, two in the abdomen, one in the shoulder. I went down an alleyway, then I passed out. Woke up in a... friend's place. He saved my life, and introduced me to William Graham Sr."

Jason stilled in his seat. "You...you were *trying* to kill yourself?! Why? Because Barbara dumped you? You *cheated*! Because we were angry? She's our friend too! You don't get to just- just" He cut himself off with an unintelligible snarl and Will felt guilt grip his heart. Worse he felt something darker, the same something that had driven him into that warehouse all those years ago.

"I didn't cheat!" He finally yelled, the words ripping themselves from his lips with all the force of a bullet. "*I told her to stop!*"

Everyone in the room froze, and the temperature in the room seemed to drop but he didn't notice. Instead, the emotional exhaustion of the day caught up with him and he found himself on the verge of breaking.

"I told her to stop." He whispered, and wondered in anyone would bother to believe him.

He doubted it.

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Reactions and Will ups the ante with Hannibal.

Chapter Six

"*I told her to stop."*

Bruce felt himself grow cold as those words left his eldest son, his heart stilling in his chest because he'd *known* something was wrong.

When Barbara had told them that she'd broken off the engagement, he'd been stunned, especially when she said that Dick had cheated on her. When Dick had turned up in Gotham a month later, he had been planning to ask him, seeing the way his son had drawn in on himself. Seeing the way he seemed to walk on eggshells around them all as if he were just on the edge of breaking. Of course it didn't help that most of the people closest to them had assumed that Dick had followed in his footsteps, even his other sons who saw him as the "Golden child".

He'd been planning to ask after their patrol, hoping the adrenaline high would help relax the acrobat enough that they would be able to talk without it ending in an argument.

Never did he regret a decision more than he did in that moment.

His son was standing in front of him, defeat slumping his shoulders, his blue eyes clenched shut as if he didn't want to see their reaction to his words. As if he'd resigned himself to the fact that no one would believe him.

It made something dark and self-depreciating curl in his gut, but he pushed it aside, moving until he stood right in front of his son.

"Dick,"

The young man tensed, but didn't answer.

"Dick, please."

Another tense moment followed, before the other opened his eyes, staring over his shoulder at the wall behind him.

"I believe you." He finally whispered, unsure of how else to begin. For all of his wealth and power, all of his charisma, emotions had never been his strong suit. For the first time since

meeting William Graham, he saw a little bit of Dick Grayson bleed through.

"Babs didn't." The agent replied, meeting his gaze. "Cat- she said she loved me. That even if no one else wanted me because of what I did, she would...and I just didn't want to be alone. So I stayed. I stayed, and one morning I woke up to find that she'd left. No note, no trace, nothing."

His heart gave another brutal stab. He was well aware of his son's issues with abandonment, something fostered first by the murder of his parents, then by his time in foster care before Bruce had taken him in. It was something he'd never quite been able to help the younger man grow out of. In fact, he'd probably only made it worse when he'd messed up his explanation of why he hadn't adopted him like he had the others.

"So I went home." Will continued, gaze shifting away until it landed on his psychiatrist. The man was standing deathly still, his entire expression blank. "I went home, hoping to explain… but Jason had already heard about it from Babs and the others knew...you were all so angry with me. I thought Catalina was right. I mean she had to be, otherwise you wouldn't have been so mad, so disappointed. Then she was gone, and I just wanted it all to stop."

"How did you end up here?" Jason asked, his voice deathly quiet, eyes flashing with the same rage Bruce had seen when he'd returned from the Lazarus Pits all those years ago. Even worse, there was guilt hidden just beneath it, pain.

His eldest shrugged. "I lived in Louisiana with Will and continued working as a cop, under the cover of being Will's estranged son. Shortly after he died, I was injured and decided I needed a change. I joined the FBI as an instructor. Then Jack began consulting me on cases and I met Hannibal."

Bruce reached forward, wanting to hug his son, then paused remembering the reaction it had gotten him earlier that day, dropped his arms, hoping his eyes would say what his actions couldn't.

"I- when you came home, I thought you were hurting from the engagement breaking. I didn't believe you had followed in my footsteps, even with Barbara's insistence that you'd told her yourself." He took a deep breath, feeling himself wanting to cringe at exposing his emotions so plainly to strangers, especially Dr. Lecter who set off every red flag in his mind. "I wanted to give you space, so i was hoping to talk to you later, especially when I saw how badly it hurt you...then you were dead and I *couldn't*. I kept telling myself that if I could just find the slightest bit of evidence you were alive then you'd come home and I could" He shook his head, and to his surprise, the younger man stepped forward...and hugged him.

It was brief, just a moment, but it was more than he'd even began to think he'd get, especially after his son's panic attack.

"Perhaps," Lecter cut in, voice genial for all that his expression was impassive, "It would be best if we rest. It has been a very taxing day for us all, and there is much to think about."

Glancing at his boys, he readily agreed, especially when he saw Damian's face.

The teen's features were drawn, as if he were in shock, but there was a slow rage building beneath it and he wanted to get him out of the room before he came out of it.

Nodding, the psychiatrist turned to his son. "Would you like to stay tonight, Will? Your family is welcome to as well."

Dick nodded then glanced at them questioningly. Uneasy about being separated from his recently returned son so soon, he agreed once more, gently guiding Damian into the room had supplied to them. Jason and Tim joined him, even as Dick pointed out that the two would be sharing the room beside his and Damian's. Just before his son left the room, he called out to him, watching as the acrobat stilled.

"I missed you, chum. We all did."

He received a tiny smile in response, a mere shadow of the megawatt smile he remembered and his heart ached as he realized that Flores had all but shattered his son.

"I missed all of you too."

**/*

Despite what many thought of him, there had been very few times in his life that Damian had wanted to kill someone.

His grandfather and his mother had both made sure he was capable of doing so, but he'd never had to, having been too young to officially take any missions. Most of the aggression he displayed, especially toward Todd and Drake was due to the fact that until Dick had taken him under his wing, he'd only known how to fight with deadly force. There was no room for play fighting or teasing in the league, where such things were perceived as frival and weak.

It was only after *his* Batman had trained him that he realized that he could do so and still be strong, after all Grayson was the strongest person he knew.

So despite what everyone thought, it was very rare for him to come across people he genuinely wanted to kill. In fact, since moving to Gotham, it had happened three times that he remembered.

The first had been shortly after Bruce had "died".

Todd had been staying at the manor for a few days, mourning (*though the man wouldn't dare admit it*), and he'd happened upon him asleep on the living room sofa.

It hadn't been peaceful.

Terror and agony had twisted the man's features, his body flinching as pained whimpers left him, then he suddenly jolted away, a muted scream on his lips.

Hidden just out of sight, he'd watched as the nearly indomitable man curled in on himself, shoulders shaking with soundless sobs and he'd wanted to kill the Joker. He wanted the man that haunted his brother's dreams *dead* and it had frightened him. A hand on his shoulder had

alerted him to Grayson's presence, the acrobat watching the crying man with something pained in his eyes. Beneath that, however, lurked something primal, something deadly and he knew he wasn't the only one. Even as the other had led him away, he'd never forgotten that sight, nor the cold hatred that it had filled him with.

The next time had been all months after the first.

He'd had a nightmare, and had gone to Dick for comfort, only to find his Batman in the throes of one of his own.

Unlike Todd, Grayson was nearly completely silent in his terror, his body jolting as if he were being beaten and yet only sharp gasps left his lips. However, he'd awaken in much the same way their brother had, bolting up, a silent scream on his lips.

No tears left the man.

Instead, he trembled violently, flinching away as Damian appeared in his line of vision...yet he didn't try to pretend he was okay.

Instead he opened his arms, closing them tight around the boy as he dove into them.

"Want to talk about it?" He'd rasped, voice hoarse as if he'd been screaming, even though he hadn't.

Damian went to answer, only to stiffen as his hands felt something unprecedented on the older man's back.

Scars, dozens of them carved trails of suffering across his batman's back, in lashes he vaguely recognized as whip marks. His fist tightened, rage boiling his blood. Why would someone- why would *anyone* do such a thing to *Grayson*?!

"Do you?" He finally responded and the other chuckled bitterly.

"No."

He nodded sharply, but the rage in his blood only grew higher as he realized the man was still trembling, blue eyes dark with remembered pain.

He'd never hated anyone as much as he hated the person that put that look there, and he closed his eyes, he couldn't help but wish his katana were cutting through the flesh of the person that had.

The final time had been when they'd found Grayson's mask.

He'd never wanted to kill anyone more than he had wanted to kill the person that has killed his brother. The person that had taken his Batman away when he'd only just gotten the older man back.

This surpassed all of those times.

The hatred that boiled his blood left a copper taste on his lips, and he could almost hear the way his blade sang as he imagined bringing it down and severing the head from the shoulders of the FBI woman that had torn Grayson's life apart. Of Gordon, who had willingly believed the worst of the man she claimed to love. Even his brothers, both of whom had teamed up on Grayson upon his return to the manor. He'd tried to stay out of it all, not close enough to Gordon to truly care, but unable to understand why Grayson had decided to sleep with someone else when he so obviously loved the red headed harpy.

Hearing the truth of it all, hearing just how much the events had hurt his brother, he wanted to hurt them all.

It was terrifying.

Worse, he knew if he dared to speak of those feelings aloud, all eyes would turn to him...so he remained silent. Instead, he closed his eyes and began to meditate, hoping he would get a chance to speak to his brother the next morning.

/

Nothing was making sense.

When Barbara had come to them all those years ago, upset over the end of their engagement and adamant that Dick had cheated, he hadn't wanted to believe her. Goldie was too loyal, and anyone with eyes could see he was in love with her, had been for the longest time. Then she told him that he'd been the one to tell her, told him that she'd been furious and broke off their engagement because she hadn't wanted to believe he could do that to her. She'd also dropped another bombshell on him.

Dick had slept with Mirage, while he was Kori and she had hoped he'd changed.

Jason really hadn't wanted to believe her...so he'd asked his friend.

She'd told him it was true and had been the reason she'd ended their relationship.

He'd asked Dick the night he arrived in Gotham.

He hadn't denied either time, shrinking in on himself as Jason had yelled at him about loyalty and other things he couldn't remember now.

Hearing the truth of it all...Jason had never been angrier, nor had he ever felt like more of an asshole.

Unlike the other Bats, he'd grown up in Crime Alley. He *knew* the effects rape could have on a person, *had seen them*. Had seen woman blame themselves after the low-life scum that lurked there forced themselves on them, had heard one woman sob for forgiveness from her husband after it was all over and he just-

How had he missed the signs?

How had they missed that Dick was falling apart?

"*I told her to stop!"*

The words made his gut twist as they replayed in his head, and he almost didn't hear it when Bruce's phone went off alerting them to an incoming call. Oracle was getting back to them.

Funnily enough, from the looks on each of their faces, he could see that none of them really wanted to speak to her.

Not after the revelations they'd been given.

Sharing another glance, none of them so much as flinched as the Bat looked down at the device and hit 'ignore'.

/

Somehow, he'd expected him to be resting, though thinking about it, that had probably been a foolish notion.

Instead, he found Will standing in the kitchen, blue eyes sharp as they stared at him with singular intensity. For a moment, he expected to be on the tail end of one of the man's vicious tongue lashings, or subjected to the sharp edge of hidden anger for forcing him to reveal one of his darkest secrets to his newly resurfaced family, and yet all he could seen in that startling gaze was curiosity.

The same curiosity he himself displayed when his prey made a gesture he didn't understand, a glimpse of the beast his mate kept hidden just below the surface.

It was...thrilling.

"Every time I think I've figured you out, you do something that completely contradicts what I'm thinking." The younger finally spoke, his tone casual, light.

Another would find it unnerving...Hannibal only tilted his head.

"And what is it that you have found, Will?"

The young agent stared at him a moment longer, then his lips curled into a slow, dangerous smile. One he'd never seen on those lips before and beneath his skin, his own beast took notice.

Will stepped closer, leaning until they were just a scant few centimeters apart and-

Kissed him.

Just a chaste brush of the lips.

Hannibal froze, the unexpected nature of the act stilling his thoughts, and his mate pulled away leaving the room, tossing a final warm statement over his shoulder.

One incongruent with the night's events.

"Good night, Hannibal."

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

Shorter than normal and a bit choppy but things are happening so there's that...

Chapter Seven

She'd found him.

A slow saccharine smile crossed her blood red lips as she entered the office of her new supervisor, never more thankful that her contacts had (*barely*) salvaged her civilian identity. Then again, there were very few outside of Bludhaven that knew who she was, and even fewer that knew just how dangerous she was. The last to see it had been her beloved, who she'd left behind in her safehouse, his vulnerable state not something she'd wanted others outside of her own to see.

She'd only been gone for a week.

He was gone when she returned.

The whispers had said he'd returned to Gotham and she went, only to find not a trace of him.

She'd continued to search anyway.

Five years later, the Bats announced that he was dead and her world crashed.

Sneaking into his funeral had wrought a pain in her heart that she'd *never* forget.

She'd raged.

Gods, had she raged, gang leaders turning up dead in droves as she strove to find out who had killed her Bluebird.

Then she'd discovered TattleCrime, a story about a fake FBI Agent.

Freddie Lounds had a way with words, and as she'd read the article, she'd almost felt bad for this William Graham.

Or she had, until she saw the picture attached to the article.

Her beloved was just as handsome as she remembered, even with exhaustion weighing down his shoulders, the scruff adding a more roguish look to him that she found herself admiring.

She'd set her plans into motion only moments later.

It had all led her here.

To the FBI building she'd left behind all those years ago, more specifically to the office of her old friend.

She knocked, anticipation building in her gut.

He opened it, and a warm smile crossed his lips, reminiscent of the one he'd worn when she'd first finished her training.

"Welcome back, Cat."

"It's good to be back, Jack."

/

He'd kissed Hannibal.

As he entered his classroom, Damian shadowing his steps, all he could think about was the cool brush of the psychiatrist's lips on his own, the shock on the man's face.

Honestly, he hadn't planned to kiss him. In fact, after leaving his family in the man's guest room, he'd been verging on the edge of anxiety attack, his emotional exhaustion the only thing holding it at bay. Conflict had waged in his heart because...he wasn't angry.

He should've been, after all he'd told Hannibal about what had happened in full confidence. Even knowing that the man's ultimate goal was to break him (*reshape him*), he trusted that the man wouldn't use it against him.

Not that.

Then there was the fact that the man had feelings for him, however ambiguous some of them were. The fact Hannibal tried to force him to reveal the truth, manipulate him into telling *Bruce,* the one person above all that he'd never wanted to find out, should've enraged him.

Filled him with betrayal.

And yet, he hadn't been mad.

Not even a little bit.

Hell, he hadn't even felt betrayed.

Just...resigned.

Confused.

After all, he knew Hannibal. Had seen the darkness, the manipulations even when the man thought him oblivious. He knew that Hannibal was the Ripper, had since their first meeting.

Since Hobbs had mysteriously discovered they knew his identity when only he and Hannibal had known.

He'd known that feelings were very rarely a fact in Hannibal's manipulations, a funny fact for a psychiatrist, and he just-

He hadn't expected that Hannibal would easily acquiesce to his wish to start elsewhere in the story, to let him shy away from it for just a bit longer.

Nor had he expected the pure rage that had graced the serial killer's gaze if only briefly, as he'd recounted the tale once more.

He couldn't understand it.

Couldn't understand why every time he thought he had Hannibal figured out, had this little Game between them figured out, the other man changed the rules.

It was only after the man had come after him, so secure in his knowledge of Will's habits, preening under the darkness of Will's own beast that he realized that he truly didn't know if he minded.

Didn't know if Hannibal knew just what he'd be unleashing if he dared to free the beast Will had spent years keeping carefully caged.

Didn't know if he minded undergoing the complete mindfuckery Hannibal no doubt had in store in order to shatter him once more and put him back together with blood and bone and warmth.

Worse, he knew it was a lie.

Kissing Hannibal felt like permission. Like absolution.

His lips twitched at the thought, and for the first time since he'd started teaching in Quantico, William Graham's students saw him smile.

The only thing keeping them from swooning was the chills it sends down their spines.

/

Grayson was a good teacher.

As he watched his new found brother move in front of the classroom, he found himself reminded of all those years ago. Back when he'd been newly arrived in America, learning under Batman but at the time, not the one he'd wanted. Back then, the acrobat had been exceedingly patient with him, even as he spat barb after barb at him.

It was similar now.

Grayson, or rather, Graham was calm and patient with his students, though the joking that had been part of his teaching style as Grayson was absent. In fact, if the way the class had

reacted when the man had smiled upon their entry, even smiling was a rarity. It was something he'd never expected from the man nicknamed by some of the Justice league as Batman's "sun".

He'd asked some of the students during their break and was stunned by the information the young woman imparted on him.

"*Professor Graham has Post Traumatic stress disorder from a case gone wrong a few months back. And even before that, his empathy makes it difficult for him to process emotions like others. Because there are too many."*

He'd stared at her, then back at his brother wondering just how much had changed in the decade that had passed since Dick had left. Luckily, he had his opportunity to to learn, as class had just ended.

As the students began to leave the room, he moved forward to the man's desk. His brother smiled slightly at him, just the barest twitch of the lips.

"Enjoy?"

He nodded, his own lips twitching involuntarily. "You're a good teacher."

The older man hummed. "Thank you." He paused, then tilted his head. "B called Barbara yesterday, didn't he?"

Damian frowned, wondering how Dick would've known, before realizing that even before his disappearing act he'd been the one that knew their father the best. Of course that wouldn't have changed because their father rarely did.

"Yes."

To his surprise his brother's brow furrowed, his head tilting slightly, and the darkness he remembered glimpsing as a child flashed in those cyan eyes.

"And you still came to dinner?"

"Why wouldn't we have?"

His brother only chuckled. "Perhaps, Bruce should answer the call next time. He might just save her life."

"Dick?" He asked, a tiny tendril of fear coiling in his gut along with something else he refused to acknowledge.

The acrobat's lips curled at the corners, reminiscent of the warm smiles he used to give, yet so much more dangerous.

"C'mon, lets get some l-"

A knock sounded, and they turned to find Crawford in the doorway, a beautiful dark haired woman behind him. She seemed familiar, though he couldn't place her face.

Grayson went still, and as Crawford began to speak, Damian glanced up to see that his brother's eyes were full of emotions too many to decipher, his expression carefully blank otherwise.

"Will, I would like for you to meet someone. This is Agent Catalina Flores. She'll be joining our team."

This was…

This was the woman that had-

His stomach roiled, his hands clenched into fists at his side and he wanted to lunge at her. Only the hand on his shoulder (*when had it got there?*) stopped him.

"William Graham." His brother introduced, voice surprisingly steady in the face of the woman. "This is Damian Wayne. A new intern."

"Pleasure to meet you both. I look forward to working with you."

That dangerous thing in his brother reared its head, and he turned his gaze to Crawford. "My classes are over for today. I'll see you tomorrow Jack."

"Evening Will."

Agent Flores reached out, and Will twisted just out of her reach. Damian had never wanted to hit a woman more than he did in that moment, and he could almost picture his blade in his hand. Feel it slicing through her delicate throat.

He looked away.

"It was nice meeting you...Professor Graham."

Will said nothing, only leading him away, and Damian couldn't help but wonder how he was the only one that saw the slight tremors wracking the man's frame.

/

Will had kissed him.

While he may have inadvertently made his own feelings known the morning before when he'd kissed the man, he hadn't expected him to reciprocate. Especially when, after the comment the night before, he was certain the man knew he was being manipulated.

So why had he?

And why after such a traumatic experience?

The questions continued to whirl through his mind as he worked through the paperwork he'd brought home from his office the day before. With the Waynes, excluding the youngest, having left shortly after Will and their youngest left for work, and Abigail settling into her room upstairs, there was literally very little he could do but ponder the developments of the day before.

Discovering that Will was actually Richard Grayson had been a shock, but less so than the kiss (or rather, kisses) they'd and the hinted confession that Will knew more than they thought he did. He couldn't help but wonder if the man knew that he was the killer Jack was hunting so fervently. If he knew that he was the reason Hobbs had become spooked enough to run. Once, he would have doubted it and yet-

Before confessing the past to his family the night before, Will had been very careful not to name anyone from his past, especially in the face of the rage that had escaped his mask of civility.

But if he did know the truth...why had he stayed?

And why hadn't he turned him in?

Blood-stained topaz eyes narrowed in thought, before being drawn back to the present as the door slammed open.

Wayne and his second eldest rushed in, the former's blue eyes harsh as they glared at him.

Ah, seems they'd figured out something.

"Give me one reason not to turn you in, Dr. Lecter."

"I have done nothing wrong."

The glare darkened, even as the youngest Wayne and Will joined them.

"Bruce…what's going on?" His mate asked cautiously.

The Wayne patriarch turned his scowl on his son. "Barbara called us back. Dick," The man hesitated, as if recognizing that he were perhaps one of the only people keeping the FBI agent sane. Something vindictive shot through Hannibal. "Dr. Lecter is a serial Killer."

Will didn't respond for a moment, then he smirked, a low chuckle leaving his lips.

Todd echoed their father's scowl.

"Goldie, this is serious! Your friend is a serial killer! He's been feeding you *people*! Hell, he fed *us* people!" The man snapped and to their surprise Will went silent at his accusations.

None of them were prepared for his response.

"I know."

Chapter 8

Chapter Eight

He'd only answered the call because he had to.

After all, Dr. Lecter set off every red flag in his mind. He left him feeling on edge in a way very few had ever managed, a fact exacerbated by the fact that he was his son's psychiatrist.

Then there was the strange interaction he'd witnessed between the two the night before.

"*Everytime I think I've figured you out, you do something that completely contradicts what I'm thinking."*

Dick's voice had been so casual, as if they were discussing something trivial like the weather and yet, underlying it was a deeper meaning. One he hadn't understood.

"*And what is it that you have found, Will?"* Cautious, yet curious.

Then Dick had kissed the man.

While he'd suspected that there was a more intimate relationship between the two, but seeing it had been jarring, especially with the way Lecter often watched his son with both possessiveness and something else. Something too dark to be love, yet resembled it so clearly.

It was only these suspicions that led him to answer the phone call, even as Dick's shattered confession rang in his ears.

"*B, please tell me you got Dick away from him."* She'd greeted him and he shared a look with Tim and Jason, both of whom looked confused.

"Dr. Lecter?"

"*Yes! B, he's- I'm pretty sure that the man is a serial killer. A* cannibalistic *serial killer."*

His blood went cold.

"Explain."

"*Alright, so Lecter has been all over the world before he settled in Virginia. In Italy, while he was working as a physician, there were several unsolved murders and disappearances. In many cases, the victims that were found were missing parts of their body. Usually an organ or a limb. Pieces we would normally take from an animal and cook. The media nicknamed the killer Il Mostro de Firenze. He was suspected, but ultimately another man was convicted. Then, when he moved to become a psychiatrist, he left Florence and came here. Since he has been here, whatever city he is in has found itself with multiple unsolved murders, all of them resembling those in Florence even if the CoD is different."*

"He's Dickiebird's psychiatrist." Jason whispered, before his eyes widened, green tinging their depths. "That bastard fed us people! He's been feeding Dick people!"

Tim blanched. "And you said his cooking was better than Alfred's."

Barbara cut back in. *"We have to get Dick away from him. Should I co-"*

"No!" Bruce cut her off, his voice harsh though he tried to soften it. "No, stay there and keep an eye on Spoiler and the others. We can handle things here."

She hesitated then he heard a shuffle. "There's something else."

He wanted to scream, yet held his ever famous composure, if only barely. "What."

"Catalina Flores," She spat the name out like acid. "She's joined the division that you said Dick was in. Just in case he's interested in seeing his ex-" He hung up.

"What are we going to do?"

He looked at Tim, then at Jason, both of whom looked sick yet determined. "Lecter first. He's closer to Dick. Then we deal with Flores."

"I'm going to kill her." Jason warned, pit madness lurking in his gaze and Bruce felt his lips curl just slightly, his own eyes flashing.

"I know nothing."

It was the first time Jason had grinned at him in a long time.

/

"***I know*.**"

The declaration sounded damningly loud in the wake of the accusations thrown by Will's family, and Hannibal couldn't help the way his eyes widened in response to them. Wayne and his sons looked just as stunned, their own eyes wide as they looked at the man that was once one of their own. Meanwhile Will raised an eyebrow at their silence, dark amusement clear in his gaze even as it skirted over them.

"Did you honestly believe that I had no idea? I suspected something was off the moment I met you, Hannibal. But I thought you were just a passing occurrence so I let it lie. Then when we were searching for Hobbs, I figured out there was something dangerous about you. The only people that knew we'd discovered where hobbs was, was me...and you. It wasn't hard to figure out that you'd tipped him off, but I couldn't figure out why. So I had an acquaintance look into you. What he found was...extensive."

The psychiatrist tensed. "What exactly did you find?"

The slighter male shrugged. "Everything. From the death of your parents and your sister, to your murder spree in Florence. But, I fall hard and I fall fast. So, I played along. Besides,

you're far from the first monster to whisper in my ear. You're not even the first to try to break me, or even succeed. I was curious about what I would become this time."

"And if he made you kill someone?" Jason snarled at his brother. "Would you be able to pull the trigger, Goldie? Would you be able to kill someone, even knowing they did nothing wrong but look tasty to your pet cannibal?!"

Hannibal scowled at being called a pet, but found himself curious as to what Will's response would be. Just as it had before, it brought about silence.

"It wouldn't be the first time."

Jason's eyes widened, while Tim blinked incredulously. "What?"

Bruce pursed his lips. "Joker."

"You knew?"

"Ra's told me after everything. When I was surprised that you didn't attack him like I did. Especially when I knew you and Jason were still talking after you moved to Jump."

Will shrugged. "I beat him to death with the same crowbar," he said calmly. "Ra's brought him back."

Hannibal swallowed thickly, feeling a flare of arousal at the thought of his mate covered in blood, brought down to his most savage level. Pictured the rage he must've felt, the carnage he'd most likely left behind.

He'd always known that a beast lurked behind those striking blue eyes but a confirmation of the fact…

Still, something about this conversation was niggling at him. Ra's al Ghul and Joker were not names associated with Bruce Wayne, beyond Joker killing the man's son years previous. *However,* they were names associated with Batman, Gotham's vigilante.

Come to think of it, Batman had come about only a month after Wayne's seven year disappearance, his weapons and technology more expensive than most of Gotham's residents could afford.

Then, just after he'd adopted Richard Grayson...Batman had gained a Robin. This also coincided with the glimpses of the scars he'd managed to catch whenever Will's clothing shifted enough to show skin.

There was also the curious disappearance of Batman's former protege, Nightwing. The hero had seemingly vanished from the face of the earth after the destruction of Bludhaven, which would fall in line perfectly with the timeline of events Will had given the night before. The only thing he didn't understand (or like) was his mate's assertion that *Hannibal* hadn't been the first to turn that beautiful mind against him.

Will was *his* mate. *His* to shatter and reshape. The fact that someone else had gotten there first sent thrills of jealousy racing through him and set the taste of copper off on his tongue. It also made him curious as to why the other predator had let the beautifully shattered man go.

Wayne accepted his son's words with a soft sigh, then looked back at Hannibal, his blue eyes colder than the iciest tundra.

"The *only* reason I haven't taken you down yet is because I have other problems to worry about. But make no mistake, I *will* take you down." He slanted a glance at Will, who looked fascinated by the confrontation. "Whether Dick wants me to or not."

Hannibal raised an eyebrow. "And will this happen as Batman or as yourself?"

The man didn't even look rattled. Instead, his eyes flashed with something darker than one would expect from one of the world's biggest heroes. Yet he didn't answer, and despite himself, Hannibal found himself curious on what he would've said if he had.

/

Eventually, the kid would learn not to trust him.

A single blue eye surveyed their surroundings curiously, a small smirk crossing their owner's lips.

When he'd found his former apprentice lying in an alley bleeding to death all those years ago, he'd never expected this to be the outcome. After all, he's been trying for over a decade to break the young man, had done horrible, despicable things to shatter that ironclad will and yet, when it had happened, he'd been furious. He'd hidden it, though if the way the kid flinched from him while they'd been at his safehouse, not well, watching as Billy treated the kid's wounds.

Sending him to William Graham had been the worst best decision in his man had been the one to get the former hero to let down his guard and had also helped him begin to heal. Losing Graham had only damaged the younger man's psyche even more.

Then came Jack Crawford and Hannibal Lecter. With every crime scene the former dragged his apprentice to, every killer he forced the man into the mind of, he only forced the kid closer to the madness that had been dogging his footsteps for years. It was only the kid's will that kept him from falling into it.

Lecter, now Lecter was a different story. The man seemed determined to force the kid over the brink and drag him back out broken but better. From what he'd been told, the man's interest in his former apprentice was nearly obsessive and worse, the kid was just as interested.

Adding in the Bat and his clan was just the spark needed to ignite the powder keg, and that was probably the only reason he'd allowed the Bat to find Lounds' article after spending so long fielding the others.

It was also what had brought him to Virginia. With his gift.

"Put her in the car."

A string of curses reached his ears and he smirked darkly as he watched Wintergreen drag the red head to the waiting car, her green eyes blazing.

All the while he couldn't help but wonder if the Kid was prepared for what was coming.

He doubted it.

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

WARNING (BATMAN FANS): Major Character Death AHEAD!

Chapter Nine

She'd known that going after Dick was a bad idea.

However, hearing the...something in Bruce's voice as he told her to stay away had drawn her to purchase the ticket to Virginia anyways.

She just hadn't planned on being kidnapped at the airport. Especially not by the man standing in front of her.

Deathstroke the Terminator.

Nothing she'd been able to find in Dick's files had ever connected the mercenary to her former fiancée and yet, here he stood, watching her with a single cold eye as he dialed a number on his phone.

"You know," the man rumbled suddenly, finger hovering over the talk button. "I never did understand what the kid saw in you, Girl."

She glared, her heart panging in remembered pain because neither had she and when he'd come to her and told her he had slept with Flores, she'd wondered if he'd perhaps found something better in *her*.

Still, she didn't know how Deathstroke knew *any* of that. "How did-?"

The man snorted, then dismissed her pressing the call button. It rang once, then twice, then-

Her breath caught in her throat.

He sounded tired, but his voice...it was almost the same.

"*Yeah?"*

"Kid, you really should know better by now."

It was silent on the other end, then there was an incredulous huff of laughter. "*You...you let them find me. Why?*"

The man shrugged, idly tapping the gun in his other hand against his thigh. "Do you remember what I told you the night I found you?"

Dick hesitated, just barely but she noticed and she could tell the mercenary did as well. *"You said that- that no one was allowed to break me...but you."*

"And yet, you've allowed your pet monster to do exactly that. And there are consequences for those actions."

"Dick!" She yelled, trying to warn him but before she could say anything else, the man raised the gun and fired, tossing her head first into oblivion, her ex-fiancé's startled cry echoing in her ears.

/

Something had changed.

Despite the terse confrontation they'd had the evening before, they'd managed to remain relatively civil to the Doctor (though they'd avoided eating his cooking again). Will had taken to watching them, his quiet nature so different from what they'd once known that he found himself curious about what else had happened to his son. Yet there were also moments when his former personality would shine through.

The night before, just after their confrontation, Damian had told them all about encountering Catalina Flores at Dick's office. About how she'd eyed his son and how Dick had stilled at the very sight of her.

Perhaps that's why he hadn't said anything when Jason snuck out later that night.

Why he pretended not to notice that Lecter was missing as well.

Especially when he woke to find Dick already awake and in the kitchen staring down at his phone with a blank expression.

"D- Will?"

His son didn't reply staring at his phone, then something in his expression began to crack and he-

He started to laugh.

Low hoarse chuckles tinged with bitterness left the younger man's lips until he was full on cackling, blue eyes wild and manic. The laugh was eerily similar to the one he'd had as a child, a product of over exposure to Joker's laughing gas. It made the hairs on the back of his neck stand up because he thought they'd fixed it years ago, just before his son had left for Jump.

He faltered back a step, glancing over at the doorway as Lecter entered, the killer's brow furrowed at the sight of the younger man. Behind Lecter, the rest of his children looked just as bewildered by their brother's behavior.

Still the brunette paid them little mind. He continued to laugh, even as tears began to stream down his cheeks.

"Um...you okay there, Goldie?"

Jason asked hesitantly and Will turned the starbright gaze on him, mania no less evident than it had been only seconds previous, even as his cackle suddenly went silent.

"Am I...okay?" He rasped, tilting his head before he sputtered out another laugh.

"I- hehehe- I think I just got my former fiancée killed." Bruce felt his insides freeze.

What?

How did-

Jason stilled. "B-Babs is dead?"

A sickening parody of a grin curled its way across Will's features, full of teeth and a vicious, dangerous kind of anger. Something he hadn't truly seen in his son since they'd chased down Tony Zucco all those years ago.

Beside him, Lecter shuddered, looking enamored.

"I forgot. He reminded me." He suddenly snarled, and Bruce could've sworn that his eyes flashed gold, except that- that was impossible. He'd kept Dick away from the Court. "It's only right I give him a reminder back."

The phone lying forgotten on the kitchen table rang, Crawford's name flashing across the screen.

Will stared at it, then swiped the talk button, placing the device on speaker.

"Graham."

"*Got a high profile case. I need both you and Lecter on it."*

"Oh?" His voice was mild and the sinking in Bruce's stomach turned to lead.

"*Gotham socialite and their chief of police's daughter. Considering that you were rumored to have been engaged to her once upon a time, I need you to make sure there is nothing linking Will Graham to Richard Grayson. Otherwise, Lounds will have a field day. Bring Wayne with you to identify her."*

His son hummed then disconnected the call.

"You know who did this." Lecter stated idly and Will cocked his head.

"If you plan to get rid of her, you have until tonight to do it. Otherwise, someone else is going to...and he doesn't know what you know so she won't suffer." He said placidly and Lecter's eyes flashed. Jason snarled angrily.

"Sometimes I wonder just how much of you is left under the intelligent psychopath you've let Lecter turn you into."

A slow, brittle smile crossed Will's lips. One that didn't even attempt to reach his eyes. And when he spoke his voice was low, a sharp whisper in the quiet.

"I am *not* the intelligent psychopath you should be looking for."

Bruce felt his heart drop because for all else, the truth in those words rang loud in the silence that followed them.

/

"Mr. Wayne, you and your family have our condolences."

Damian listened impassively as Crawford exchanged words with his father, gaze stuck on the slim form of his older brother. Since their arrival it seemed like curveball after curveball had come out to hit the acrobat, leaving him little room to breathe. It was horrifying to watch, especially since Todd seemed determined to drive their brother away, his words driving the elder further into the arms of the cannibal lurking on his shoulder.

Further away from their family.

Drake was just as bad, saying little against Todd's accusation and assumptions, seemingly unaware that his inaction was probably making Grayson's impending disappearance more inevitable.

And that's exactly what said disappearance was going to be.

Inevitable.

Even now, as Grayson gazed down at the long cold corpse of Gordon, he could see the wheels turning. Plans being created and discarded at an amazing pace, something that had always impressed him when Dick was his Batman.

His brother was planning to run again, most likely taking his cannibal and the girl with him.

He could see it.

Could feel it.

And he wasn't the only one.

Beside him, his father's eyes had gained a sad knowing gleam, a reluctant acceptance.

Worse, it wasn't just for Grayson either.

It was because he knew.

If Grayson ran...Damian was going with him.

/

"Did you still love her?"

He'd expected the question, if he were honest, especially given Hannibal's obsession with knowing everything about him and yet...

He couldn't figure out how to put it all into words, so he just spoke, hoping the other would be able to decipher what he couldn't.

"Babs was...she was my first love and my best friend. When- when everything happened, I went to her and begged her to forgive me. She- I don't even know why I felt so betrayed when she turned me away I mean I had literally just broken her heart. But I did and I still do, even though she didn't know exactly what happened. So to answer your question...I don't know."

The psychiatrist nodded, even as the usual possessiveness flashed in his gaze. However, before the man could say anything, *she* approached them.

Guess she'd escaped Jason and Hannibal's hunt the night before.

Shame.

"I'm sorry about your loss, *querido*." She whispered softly and despite himself he flinched, casting his gaze away from her.

Anything not to meet those piercing eyes.

Hannibal's heavy hand at the small of his back calmed some of the anxiety her presence caused and he tuned out the conversation as that low voice responded to her, crisp and full of a polite disdain he remembered from the socialites of his childhood.

"I believe Agent…"

She scowled. "Flores." She responded sharply.

Hannibal's voice didn't change. "Agent Flores, it would be in your best interest to remove yourself from my client's presence. You are causing him undue distress."

"Nonsense, Mr. Graham and I met yesterday, we're friends."

The older man glanced at her, blood-topaz gaze cold and she flinched despite herself. Behind her, Will caught a glimpse of orange metal in the trees, met a single blue eye hidden in the foliage. It slid from him...to her.

Then it was gone.

He almost smiled.

/

He'd found her.

The person that had led his apprentice to that alley all those years ago. The one that had driven him back into his grasp.

Had she chosen any other method, he would have probably thanked her and yet as it were, he couldn't help the rage he felt because RICHARD GRAYSON WAS ***HIS.***

The boy had been his since the first time he'd laid eyes on him, only a year before the Bat had fired the boy from being Robin.

Since he'd been the first to attempt to shatter that beautiful mind when the boy was fifteen...and the first to succeed.

He had driven the kid to every limit imaginable, broken him in ways even the boy's new pet wouldn't dare to try and this little spider-themed upstart thought she would get away with trying to *steal* from *him*.

Perhaps the warning message he'd left when he'd decimated Gotham's Court of Owls had fallen on deaf ears and blind eyes.

Perhaps, the destruction he'd wrought on Spyral's ranks had as well because she...she obviously had no idea who she had crossed by daring to take what wasn't hers. By daring to *touch* what wasn't hers.

And perhaps, that was what made the shock in her eyes all the more satisfying when she entered her apartment to find him waiting. Especially after he'd worked to prevent her from being caught by Red Hood and Lecter the night before.

"Hello, Agent Flores," He paused and tilted his head. "Or would you prefer I call you Tarantula?"

"W-what are you doing here, Deathstroke?" She asked, her fear nearly palpable, after all, very few had faced him and lived.

He smirked, then moved faster than she could see. Just as the darkness took her, she could hear his response.

"Setting a trap."

She couldn't help but wonder who the trap was for, nor the terror that gripped her at the most obvious answer.

"*Oh, querido,"* She thought. *"What have you done?"*

/

"You're leaving."

He didn't try to deny it, only looked up at his adoptive father warily. "Are you going to try to stop me?"

To his surprise, the man shook his head. "No. I- I just...stay in contact? Please? I can't lose both of you."

He frowned. "Both?"

"Did you honestly think Damian was going to let you go alone? Now that he knows you're alive?"

He snorted, remembering how close his brother had stuck to him when they'd gone to his class. "Even though you know I'm taking Hannibal and Abigail?"

Bruce shrugged. "I've never been the best parent, but I have always known there was darkness in you, Dick. Just like I've always known it was in me. In Jason. In Damian. If he's what you need...then I understand. Just be careful. And if he ever hurts you-"

His son smiled, soft and warm like he used to all those years ago. It was the first time he'd seen that expression since they'd arrived and it made something in his chest soften.

"I know, B. I love you."

He hugged the kid back, trying not to acknowledge the way his eyes burned when he realized that it was as much a greeting as it was a goodbye.

"I love you too, chum."

He pulled away and cleared his throat. "Now, how do we go about catching Wilson?"

Will blinked. "It doesn't even surprise me that you know that...how do you know that?"

He shrugged. "Found the files you hid in the main computer after your death. I moved them to a private flash drive so the others wouldn't see. They don't talk about what he did to you, but you did mention he had an unnatural obsession with you. Question is, how did he know where you were?"

Will sighed. "He was the one that helped me after...after."

Bruce nodded, then looked down at his son. "How do you want this to go, Dick?"

The younger man fell silent for a moment, then...he smiled.

Chapter 10

Chapter Ten

"*You never completed your training."*

He shuddered at his master's words, wondering just what else he had left to learn. After all, the man had gone over everything from torture endurance to weapons. Hell, even just the night before, the man had claimed that he had taught him nearly everything he knew.

So, what-

"*In order for you to finally be able to say you've completed your training. You have to kill me."*

His heart stopped in his chest, breath hitching at those words. Slade watched him placidly, but he didn't stop talking.

"*I won't make it easy on you as I have been. I'm not going to hold back. Once you are able to kill me, when I'm fighting at full strength, once you are able to channel all the anger and rage, all the pain you feel in my presence into that final killing blow…then you will have officially have completed your training."*

Dick swallowed nervously.

"*Wh-what if I don't want to kill you?"*

The man struck him harshly with the flat side of his katana and watched coldly as he hit the ground.

"*Then you're weaker than I ever thought you were."*

Will pursed his lips as he remembered that night, remembering the way he had panicked at Slade's words. The way his heart had raced in anticipation of finally being able to end the torment the mercenary had inflicted on him and yet at the same time stilling because at that time, Slade had been all he'd known for almost two years. During his captivity, the mercenary had controlled every aspect of his life, from what food he ate to what he wore. Where he slept, who he spoke to, even the more intimate aspects of his body, all of it was controlled by the man that had called himself his master.

The idea of being free of him, of being the one to slide the blade into his black heart himself…was terrifying.

Or at least, it had been.

Until now.

The boy that Slade had chained had changed a long time ago, morals darkening and loosening, becoming almost sociopathic in nature. He had killed men under Slade's hand, had tried to wash away that blood by becoming Nightwing, only for his hands to become awash in it once more as Talon and as Agent 37. He knew how everyone had looked at him before his disappearance, he was the "happy bat", the *friendly one*.

He and Tim were the bats without a kill count and yet he knew that if someone were to take a closer look, they'd see the truth.

He was the bat with the highest body count.

Too bad no one that knew was still alive.

No one, but Slade.

The man that had taken Bruce's teachings and warped them, twisting and breaking them when he had to, breaking *him*.

He'd been ready to kill the man for years, and yet before the incident with Blockbuster, with Tarantula, he had stopped himself. Had convinced himself that he "couldn't".

Shouldn't.

Then Slade had helped him, and he'd been so angry and yet so grateful, that once more…his hand was stayed.

Not this time.

This time he knew how it would end.

What he would do.

And better, there was another monster on his side, one as possessive as Slade, and just as dangerous.

Lying in the guest room of Hannibal's home, he could hear Jason slipping out of the house, Then Hannibal soon after.

Moments later there was a soft knock on his door. He stood, dressed in suit he hadn't worn in over a decade, domino mask slipping into place as he did so.

Bruce stood on the other side.

"Ready?"

"As I'll ever be."

The Bat nodded sharply. Then, they were gone.

/

He can tell it's a trap as soon as they arrive.

For one, though Flores' car sat in the driveway of the apartment, every light in her home is off. There's no glow of the television, not even the gleam of her bedside table which his sources had told him she liked to leave on as she read in the evening. And yet, he finds himself curious.

After all, the woman had escaped them the night before, and after meeting her earlier that afternoon, seeing the possessiveness in her eyes, the obsession she bore toward *his* mate, he was unwilling to let her escape them again.

He wanted her *dead*.

He *needed* her to be dead, perhaps as badly as he wanted the other monster on Will's shoulder gone.

Maybe that's why he didn't warn Todd.

Why he followed the younger man into Flores' home, ignoring the way his instincts were snarling that another predator was nearby.

Why he caught the glimmer of something shiny in the corner of his eye and still allowed himself to be struck.

Or perhaps it was because he was curious.

After all, he couldn't help but wonder about the other predator drawn into his mate's orbit.

He awoke what seemed like only minutes later to find Todd snarling and cursing beside him, Flores bound to a chair in front of him. The woman looked vastly different from the confident agent she'd been that afternoon, her cheeks wet with tears and mascara, blood staining one shoulder where a blade had been shoved through it.

However, it was the man behind her that held his attention.

He was tall, nearly as tall as Hannibal himself, but much more muscular, his entire being screaming power. Twin swords were strapped to his back, and more weapons were strapped across his body, his face hidden by and metal mask bisected in orange and black. Everything about him set Hannibal's hackle's on end, especially when he realized that the man was observing him just as keenly as he was watching him.

He didn't even seem interested in Todd, a fact that seemed to rankle the boy's fierce temper.

"Hannibal Lecter VIII. Il Mostro di Firenze." The man began, voice deep, musing. "The kid always did attract the worst kinds of people. A surgeon turned psychiatrist. Funny you went from being paid to cut people up to doing it as a hobby when you quit."

Hannibal hummed. "Yes, well according to my records, I was merely haunted by the loss of one too many patients on the operating table." He frowned slightly, while the other predator snorted.

"Of course."

There was a moment of silence before Todd sighed dramatically. "What are you even waiting for? Aren't you here to kill us?"

He got the impression the man was raising an eyebrow. "I have no interest in an undead bird. Especially when I could have the original."

"You killed the girl." Hannibal noted and the man shrugged.

"Punishment. The Kid knows better than to let anyone else get under his skin far enough that I'm no longer the thing he fears the most. He's been mine since I first laid eyes on him, but he almost forgot."

Hannibal felt his beast snarl at the possessiveness in the other man's voice, the challenge in his words and a rush of savage rage went through him.

His skin rippled in response.

The man laughed.

Flores whimpered.

The psychiatrist snarled suddenly reminded of the woman's presence but before he could do anything about it another scent entered his nose. One he knew as well as his own.

Will.

He turned automatically and his mouth went dry.

Wh- what is the world was he *wearing*?

He had never paid much attention to the caped community, and yet he had heard about how gorgeous Nightwing had been from a few of his younger clients. Seeing him then, the way the Kevlar hugged his lean frame and clung to his every curve was scandalous.

It also made his beast roar in a mix of approval and jealousy that anyone else was seeing his mate. What was worse was that the tension that had been plaguing the other was entirely absent.

Behind his mate, Wayne appeared as Batman, his figure imposing in the shadows of the room.

"Just who we were waiting for." The masked man greeted calmly, and Will shrugged.

"Not like I was late. Besides you and Hannibal seemed to be bonding over who I belonged to."

The man twitched. "Of course, Kid. Your cannibal knows you belong to *me*."

Todd shuddered and glanced at Will. "Your taste in men is seriously fucked up."

His mate barked out a laugh. "Tell me something I don't know. I've been in love with three men and only one was ever any good for me. And he isn't in this room."

"Ah yes, your Tiger King." Hannibal's eyes narrowed, but the masked interloper only hummed. "He was at your funeral, both of them."

Will didn't reply for a moment, then he stepped forward. "I'm ready, Slade."

Something about their captor seemed to harden in an instant, the air around him going cold then without warning, he was moving.

His swords came down (he hadn't even seen him remove them from the sheaths on his back) and were met with a pair of escrima sticks.

Then suddenly, they were moving.

Kicks, punches, a slash, a parry, they moved in the way people did when they knew their opponent's every move as well as they knew their own and Hannibal-

Hannibal had never seen something so beautiful.

Flores' apartment was spacious, but not so much that they could move with as much ease as he wished and yet it seemed to bother neither of them. He was distantly aware of the bonds around his wrists loosening and he glanced up at the Bat, who stared at him for a moment, then freed Todd.

Then, just as silently as he'd appeared, the Bat vanished.

It felt like a blessing, especially when he saw that the man hadn't freed Flores.

He hadn't even removed the knife in her shoulder.

The woman sobbed in terror at seeing them free.

"Querido!" She called in panic, but Will's entire focus seemed narrowed down to the man he was fighting. Neither was giving an inch.

She cried out even louder and Hannibal snarled at her, his own rage soared higher, it was little effort for him to reach out and twist the blade in her shoulder. She screamed, the sound dying in her throat as the Todd shoved a gun in her mouth.

"Shut. Up."

She sniffled.

Hannibal smiled and beside him, Todd shuddered.

/

He'd done it.

A shuddering breath left his lips as he collapsed to his knees beside his once master's body, the man's own sword plunged into its owner's heart. Since entering the fight, it had seemed like he'd been running on pure adrenaline, and yet it while it had blocked out the cries and screams coming from Catalina as Hannibal and Jason wrought their vengeance, it hadn't blocked the last words of the man in front of him.

Hadn't stopped the surge of warmth he felt at them, or the lingering tendril of shame.

"*I'm proud of you, Kid." -A gasp, a sputtering cough, then an almost smile. "Training, complete."*

An incredulous laugh left him unbidden and unnerving in the suddenly silent room.

He hadn't expected this to be the outcome of his past catching up to him. Hadn't expected the rush of relief and anger and *everything* to hit him at once as he realized that both of the people that had tormented his dreams in the past decade, both of the people that had nearly destroyed him, were dead.

He was finally free.

A hand landed on his shoulder, and as he looked up into those vivid blood-topaz eyes he did the only thing he could think of.

He kissed him.

No one had to know that his heart skipped a beat when the man's arms wound around his waist and their owner kissed him back.

A soft sound of disgust drew them apart and he distantly heard Jason say something about getting rid of the bodies. Before his successor could do so he reached down and grabbed both of his former master's beloved blade, unwilling to leave them behind.

Once Jason was gone, he looked up at Hannibal.

"How do you feel about France?"

"Me, you, and Abigail-"

"And Winston and Damian."

The cannibal raised an eyebrow. "Wayne is letting you take his child."

Some of his older self bled through, still high on freedom, his lips curling into a slight pout. "He was mine first."

Hannibal smirked then kissed him again. "I have a beautiful estate in Bordeaux."

Inside of him something seemed to settle and he could do nothing but smile.

/

They were gone.

He knew it the moment he awakened, even as Tim and Jason shuffled into the living room, neither aware that their brothers were gone.

As he prepared to deal with the inevitable fall out, he felt his spirit ease for the first time in years.

Yeah, they'd be okay.

Besides, Will had promised to help him surprise Alfred for Christmas.

FIN~

Works inspired by this one

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